

SMP or MMP: Making your final decision

April 14, 2007
Weekend 5 of Deliberation

Objectives

- to prepare you for your final decision
- to review the knowledge we have acquired about single member plurality and mixed member proportional

What the regulation tells you

- “The assembly shall assess Ontario’s current electoral system and different electoral systems and
- shall recommend whether Ontario should retain its current system or adopt a new one.”

Principles led learning and principles led deliberation

- You began learning with an examination of principles, now you will conclude deliberation by examining how those principles are reflected in the current system and your MMP model

Your principles used to assess electoral systems

fairness of representation

legitimacy

effective parties

stable and effective government

effective parliament

accountability

simplicity and practicality

voter choice

stronger voter participation

You established three design objectives

- greater voter choice
 - voters should be able to indicate both their preferred candidate and party
- proportionality
 - the number of seats a party wins should more closely reflect its share of the vote
- strong local representation
 - each geographic area of the province should have at least one representative

All electoral systems
embody these principles and
objectives to differing
degrees.

Electoral systems are about representation as well as outcomes

- Electoral systems can be considered from two broad perspectives:
 1. How voters are represented
 2. What kinds of parties, governments and legislatures are produced

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- Your principles relate to ***representation*** (how voters' express their preferences and how they are represented)
 - Your principles also relate to ***outcomes*** (kinds of government, party structure, legislative functions)

What issues of representation do you think are important?

- Strong local representation
- Greater voter choice
- Proportionality

- Better representation of underrepresented groups

How well does SMP do on representation?

- *Strong Local Representation*

- the defining characteristic of representation under SMP
- this is how we think of representation in this country which means a different kind of representation
- so important that it helped shape your MMP design

How well does SMP do on representation?

- *Voter Choice*

- limited to one choice -- no way to split vote between candidate or party
- choice of a few broad based political parties

How well does SMP do on representation?

- *Proportionality*

- not designed to produce proportional results and rarely does
- elections are not about proportionality but about winning local seats

How well does SMP do on representation?

- *Representation of underrepresented groups*

- limited because the barrier to winning a seat is high
- history of SMP has not been favourable to women and underrepresented groups

How well does your MMP do on representation?

- *Strong local representation*

- is a proportional system that maintains our single member local representation
- weaker than in SMP (fewer local districts)

How well does your MMP do on representation?

- *Greater voter choice*

- two votes, one for a party one for a candidate

How well does your MMP do on representation?

- *Proportionality*

- your system is designed to produce good proportionality
- this is done by a province-wide, 30% tier

How well does your MMP do on representation?

- *Representation of underrepresented groups*

- You chose province wide and closed list tier to help representation of underrepresented groups
- 30% list tier + transparency requirements about list creation should help underrepresented groups

What outcomes do you think are important?

- Stable and effective government
- Effective party system
- Effective legislature

How well does SMP do on outcome issues?

- *Stable and effective government*

- usually produces single party majority governments

- a government that can speak and act with authority
- a government that can implement its mandate
- doesn't require the support of others

- elections a competition between governing teams and less about representation

How well does SMP do on outcome issues?

Effective party system

- encourages broad tent parties
- parties that focus on specific issues do not tend to gain representation
- clear lines of accountability
- it's obvious who gets credit and who's to blame

How well does SMP do on outcome issues?

- *Effective legislature*

- very effective if legislature is about passing legislation

- less effective if legislature is about constructive political debate (adversarial environment--one party control of process)

How does MMP fare on outcome issues?

- We can only assume what might happen in Ontario under MMP is based on what happened elsewhere under MMP

How well does your MMP do on outcome issues?

- *Stable and Effective government*
- Governments will likely be coalitions
 - usually majority coalition
 - MMP coalition governments are usually stable

What do we know about coalition governments?

- can take some time to form after an election
- can be among parties of similar ideologies or among parties of different ideologies that are willing to compromise

What do we know about coalition governments?

- no more frequent elections and less likelihood of policy lurches from one government to another
 - if coalitions fail, can result in another election or new coalition

How well does your MMP do on outcome issues?

- *Effective party system*
 - greater likelihood that more parties get seats
 - greater number of smaller parties
 - parties will be represented in different ways

How well does your MMP do on outcome issues?

- *Effective legislature*
- New dynamic in legislature with coalition government
 - more effective because more diverse views represented?
 - more cooperative because no party has a majority?
- New dynamic in legislature with some MPPs elected in districts and others province-wide

The Cost of Change

- *Financial Cost*

- Greater number of politicians from 107 to 129
- Transition costs
- Boundary commission

Other Costs of Change

- It will take time for voters and politicians to adjust to the new system
- but you know that your proposed system will have legitimacy if passed in referendum

What is the task before you?

- You are to make a decision:
 - Looking at the your principles and objectives, which is the best system for Ontario
 - One option involves no change
 - The other option involves change

To put it simply...

- What are the problems with the present system
- Does MMP solve these problems?
- Is the cost greater than the benefits or is the benefit greater than the costs?

Questions to guide your deliberation

- There is no 'perfect' electoral system
- Which system is more legitimate for Ontario?
- Does MMP or SMP better represent what you think elections should accomplish?