

In the last two decades, the percentage of women in the Ontario legislature has averaged only 18 per cent. Today, only 26 of the 103 members are women, and only eight of the members are visible minorities.

Electoral reforms have the potential to radically increase the participation of women and minorities in Ontario's Legislature.

On October 10, 2007, at the next provincial election, there will be a referendum on whether Ontario should adopt a "Mixed Member Proportional" system (MMP). If adopted, this will change how votes are translated into seats in the legislature.

Equal Voice is a national, multi-partisan, volunteer organization committed to raising awareness of the under-representation of women in Canadian Politics.

This pamphlet was made with the generous support of the **Doris Anderson Fund for Electoral Reform for Women**. The Fund is devoted to woman-friendly electoral reforms that assist women to be nominated, to finance their campaigns, and to get elected to all levels of government in Canada.

October 10, 2007
- say YES -



**to more women
and minorities
in Legislature**

more diversity

more inclusiveness

more democracy

Why change the electoral system?

Our current system is called "Single Member Plurality", or "First Past the Post". The party with the most votes wins the seat. This system results in a real disparity between a party's percentage of the vote versus the number of seats won. The leading party usually gains more seats than their share of the vote, while second and third place parties can have many votes but end up with few or no seats at all. Under the MMP system, election results will be proportional: a party's share of seats in the legislature will reflect its portion of the vote.

Only 18 countries worldwide have achieved the UN goal of having 30% or more women represented in national parliament. All of these countries use some form of proportional representation, including the MMP system.

Why support it

The electoral system cannot, on its own, create a more diverse legislature. But in countries that have adopted the MMP system, there has been an increase in the participation of women and underrepresented citizens in the legislature.

It will still take the commitment of party leaders and women to run as candidates to ensure that the MMP system results in the election of more women. But we believe that these reforms will accelerate women's participation in electoral politics.

What it'll look like - One ballot, two votes. Voters will get two votes on a single ballot. They can vote for a local candidate (the same as before). But voters would get a second vote, to elect a party. It often happens that a voter likes a local candidate but not their party, or alternately, supports a party but not its local candidate. Under the MMP system, a voter will have the option of electing their preferred candidate and party.

How it works. Locally elected candidates will win their seats, as before. But the party vote will determine the overall share of seats a party wins in the legislature. If a party's number of elected candidates falls below their share of the party vote, there is a top-up from party "list members". Prior to the election, each party publishes a list of candidates, in the order they are to be elected. Candidates can run locally and be included on the list. If they win in their district, their name is crossed off and the position falls to the next person on the list. This allows a party to ensure that its priority candidates will have a seat. By ranking women high on their lists, parties can boost their chance of securing a seat in legislature. Because these lists will be made public, voters can see which party has the strongest slate of women candidates. Under the new system, there will be 329 seats in the legislature. 90 seats will be allotted to local candidates and 239 will be allotted for party list members.

United Kingdom, Scotland, Wales, New Zealand and Germany all use the MMP system.