

A fairer voting system — working people need it now

By **Tim Little**

This provincial Election Day, OPSEU members and all working people in Ontario can change to a more democratic, modern voting system that delivers fairer results, more choice and stronger representation.

In a special referendum, we can decide whether to keep the current voting system — and the winner-take-all politics that go with it — or switch to a made-in-Ontario form of proportional representation, known as MMP.

What's wrong with the way we vote now?

“Under our current voting system, political parties can win absolute majorities with about 40 per cent of the vote,” explains OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas. “With this ‘phony majority,’ they can cut jobs and public services at will.”

“Progressive people often have to choose between a

‘strategic vote’ and a vote likely to be ‘wasted’ on a party that can’t win in their riding. This must change.”

The proposed system is fairer. It’s simple: If you get the votes, you get the seats. No more choosing between ‘strategic voting’ and a ‘wasted vote.’

As a bonus, under MMP, our Legislature will likely look more like our province. (It’s no secret: the current legislature is dominated by people who are wealthy, middle-aged, white and male.)

But we have a huge challenge ahead. It will take 60 per cent support in the Oct. 10 referendum to change to this new, fairer system. (That, too is unfair!)

What's the new plan?

It’s a made-in-Ontario plan based on models that work well in New Zealand, Germany, Scotland and

Wales. The new plan was developed by the non-partisan Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform — 103 representative Ontario citizens.

We’d get two votes: the one we’ve always had to elect a local MPP, and another vote for a political party.

Just 90 MPPs will be elected from single-member ridings. Another 39 will be elected to province-wide seats, to balance the unfairness of the riding system.

The result: no ‘wasted’ votes, and a legislature that looks like the one Ontarians voted for.

OPSEU’s 117,000 voters can achieve a big breakthrough on October 10. By voting for the new, fairer voting system, we’ll be ensuring the election of governments that truly represent whom we voted for. ♪



**Vote for
MMP**

Mixed Member Proportional:

- ✓ more choice
- ✓ fairer results
- ✓ stronger representation

**October 10 electoral reform referendum:
It's time to make democracy better!**

For more information:
VoteforMMP.ca

email: info@VoteforMMP.ca
toll-free phone: 1-866-283-3667
in Toronto call: 416-644-1034

Objections from the gallery — a response to the critics of MMP

Many pundits have criticized the Citizens' Assembly plan. Here are their main arguments — and our responses.

Won't MMP mean more politicians?

Yes, and more democracy. It will still mean fewer MPPs than we had in the 1980s and 1990s, when Ontario was far smaller. Ontario now has the fewest democratic representatives per capita in Canada. Right now each MPP represents 110,000 Ontarians. More democracy? We're all for it!

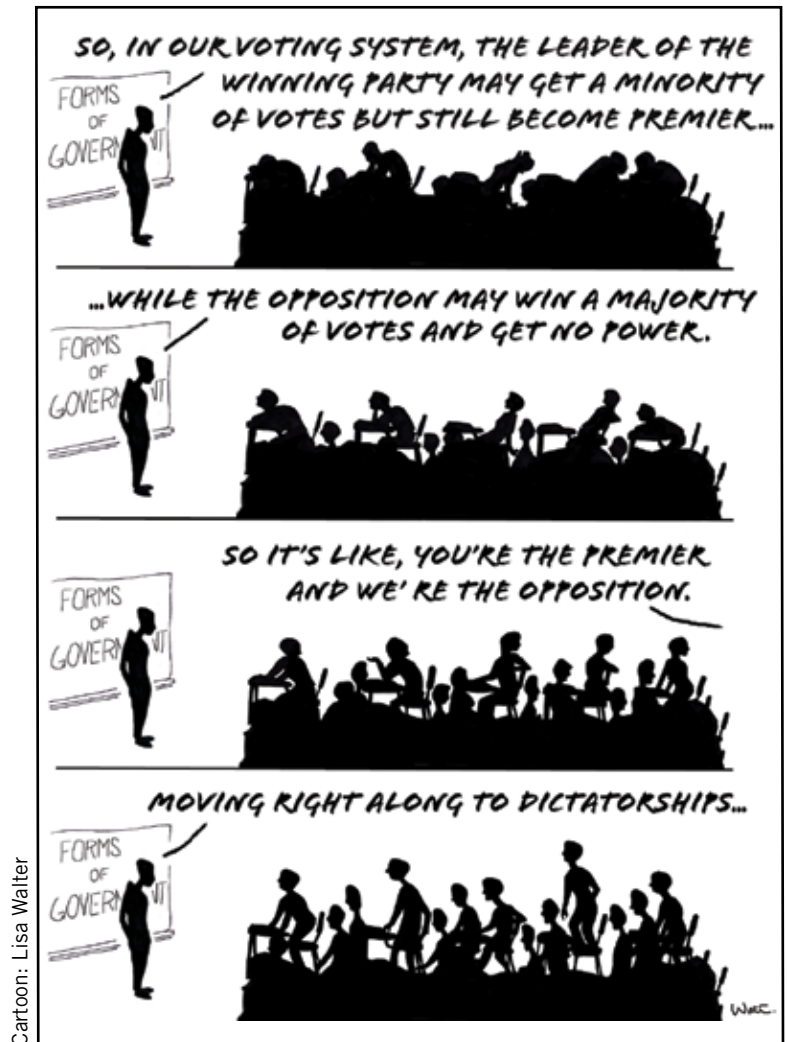
Won't it create a new class of political hacks?

No. Everyone will be elected. Under our current unfair system, legislators look pretty much alike, and come from similar backgrounds. Under MMP voting, parties will choose a group that looks more like Ontario. Elsewhere, countries with MMP systems approach 50 per cent women in parliament (by contrast, Ontario and Canada average below 20 per cent).

Won't we be condemned to permanent minority governments and instability?

No — only if that's what Ontarians vote for. No Ontario government has received majority voter support since the Depression. Since then we've had many 'phony majorities' we didn't vote for. If we want a majority in future, we'll have to vote for it!

Minority governments under MMP-style systems are just as stable as majorities under the present system and almost always last the full term. In New Zealand, no minority government has fallen in the 11 years of MMP so far. This is because there is no possibility they can win the phony majorities that the present system can deliver to one party. MPPs will have to learn the art of compromise for the common good.



Cartoon: Lisa Walter

Won't this give small parties too much power?

No — parties will get seats based on votes received. You get exactly what you vote for. (For example: a similar change at the federal level would transfer dozens of seats from the Bloc Québécois to the NDP, based on voting support.)

Isn't the proposed system more complicated?

No. Any system seems complicated if you are new to it, but simple if you've grown up with it. Even so, 'complicated' is better than 'unfair.'

Find out more about the multi-partisan VOTE for MMP campaign at www.VoteForMMP.ca. See the full report of the Citizens' Assembly at www.citizensassembly.gov.on.ca.

<http://www.opseu.org/politicalaction/index.htm>