

What Can Ontarians Expect from Electoral Reform?

Forecasting the Consequences for Women and Ethnic Minorities

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Factors Influencing the Representation of Women & Ethnic Minorities

- ◆ Electoral system
- ◆ Desire of political actors to increase group's presence
- ◆ Formal quotas or reserved seats
- ◆ Demographic concentration of group
- ◆ Mobilization of group interests
- ◆ Configuration of ridings with regard to "communities of interest"
- ◆ Incumbency rates
- ◆ Cost of election campaigns...

Factors Influencing the Representation of Women & Ethnic Minorities

- ◆ Election method is only a partial explanation for levels of representation of marginalized groups
 - less relevant than the desire of political actors to increase group's presence

Factors Influencing the Representation of Women & Ethnic Minorities

- ◆ One kind of reform may have more or less positive effects for different groups
- ◆ What can we expect of Ontario's proposed electoral reform?
 - Women
 - Visible Minorities
 - Aboriginals

Representation in Ontario Legislature Today

	<u>popⁿ</u>	<u>legislature</u>	<u>IndexPR</u>
Women	50.9%	25.2% (n=26)	0.49
Vis. Minority	19.1%	8.7% (n=9)	0.46
Aboriginal	1.7%	0% (n=0)	0

Key Questions

- ◆ Will MMP increase each group's representation?
- ◆ Will women, visible minorities, Aboriginals tend to be *relegated* to lists?
- ◆ Might list MPs serve as stronger *substantive* representatives of group interests?
- ◆ Might policies be more responsive to the needs of historically marginalized groups?

Where to look for answers?

- ◆ Scholarly research on women's and ethnic minority representation
 - Extensive research on conditions that promote women's representation, much less on visible minorities and Aboriginals
 - More attention to descriptive than substantive representation
- ◆ New Zealand experience with MMP
 - Elections 1996, 1999, 2002, 2005

Will Ontario reform increase each group's representation?

- ◆ Women: YES, but only marginally
- ◆ List systems favour election of women, but only under certain conditions
 - ✓ High district magnitudes: many seats to fill
 - ✓ High party magnitudes: party expects to win many seats
 - ✓ High electoral threshold for a party to qualify for seats
 - ✓ Parties committed to increasing women's presence
- ◆ Further reform?
 - Pressure parties to zipper lists
 - Increase list seats
 - Help women to win nomination in redrawn ridings

Will Ontario reform increase each group's representation?

- ◆ Visible minorities: Most likely YES
- ◆ SMP works well where minorities are concentrated, and where there is strong party competition
 - Federal parliament: Visible minorities proportionately *better* represented than women
- ◆ Lists with preferred voting are most advantageous (Denmark)
- ◆ Closed lists may help non-concentrated minorities
- ◆ Further reform?
 - Create new ridings in growing urban centres

Will Ontario reform increase each group's representation?

- ◆ Aboriginals: POSSIBLY
- ◆ Much smaller in number than visible minorities, rarely able to influence constituency outcomes
 - MMP in New Zealand has increased Aboriginal representation (12% of Parliament via lists; 5% via Maori districts)
 - Maori Party is politically visible and influential
- ◆ Further reform?
 - Increase list seats
 - Mobilize for Aboriginal inclusion

Optimal Outcomes after Reform 129 legislative seats

	<u>local seats*</u>	<u>list seats**</u>	<u>% MPPs</u>
Women	23	19	32.5
Vis. Minority	8	7	11.6
Aboriginal	0	1	0.7

* Assumes no decline in proportion of local seats held by group

** Assumes group achieves proportional representation on lists

Realistic Outcomes after Reform 129 legislative seats

	<u>local seats*</u>	<u>list seats**</u>	<u>% MPPs</u>
Women	19	19	29.5
Vis. Minority	8	7	11.6
Aboriginal	0	1	0.7

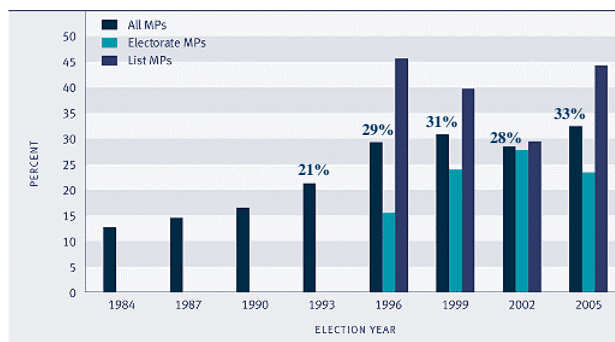
* Assumes half of lost seats were held by women

** Assumes group achieves proportional representation on lists

Will women & minorities tend to be *relegated* to lists?

- ◆ To some extent, YES
 - Growth will come through lists
 - Problem if list MPPs are considered less legitimate
- ◆ But loss of 13 constituency seats, and redrawn boundaries will mean heightened competition for remaining 90 seats
 - Expect initial *decrease* in % of women in constituency seats, though numbers should bounce back over time

Women's representation in New Zealand



Might list MPs serve as stronger *substantive* representatives?

- ◆ Theoretically, YES
 - PR lists are created to reflect societal diversity, so expect list MPPs to orient themselves toward group needs
 - Without local riding demands, more time to represent province-wide interests (women's, Aboriginal issues)
- ◆ In practice?
 - Tremblay (2007) finds women elected to multi-seat districts (NZ, Australia) no more likely to say they represent women, than those elected to SMD

Might policies be more responsive to the needs of marginalized groups?

- ◆ Cautious YES
 - Evidence that women, visible minority representatives do “act for” group interests (e.g., in parliamentary debates)
 - List MPPs *may* be more attentive to group issues
 - But party discipline remains an obstacle
 - More socially progressive parties will gain seats, and could hold balance of power in legislature

Recommendations: Electoral Reform *Plus*

- ◆ **Must pressure parties to include proportionate numbers of women, visible minorities and Aboriginals *in eligible positions***
- ◆ Increase list seats
- ◆ Increase constituency seats in urban centres, where voter to seat ratio is too high (caution NZ reapportionment)
- ◆ Examine other proposals to promote participation of Aboriginal people in electoral democracy
 - Aboriginal electoral districts, seats in Senate, Aboriginal Parliament