

The 2024 Policy Comment period has now closed. Members will begin ranking the policies on October 11th.

Note: This is a draft policy statement submitted by a GPO member as part of the 2024 Policy Statement development process. It is not an official GPO position unless passed by membership at the November 8-10 Convention.

Submitter

Blake Hamilton

Type of motion

Policy Statement

How would this Policy Statement affect the Constitution, Bylaws, or Policy?

Replaces existing item

Updates/amends existing item

Repeals existing item

Policy Statement Information

Title

A Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform

Preamble

WHEREAS the Province of Ontario has experienced election results that do not accurately reflect the will of voters;

WHEREAS voter dissatisfaction with the current first-past-the-post electoral system has led to declining civic participation and voter turnout;

WHEREAS social legitimacy in electoral reform requires extensive citizen involvement in the design of the system;

WHEREAS a citizens' assembly provides an effective way of establishing a citizens' consensus on challenging and complex issues, compared to referendums, which tend to be divisive and unpredictable;

Operative clauses

BE IT RESOLVED THAT policy 8.1.10 Electoral Reform for Proportional Representation be amended to state:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Green Party of Ontario would support the convening of a Citizen's Assembly run by an independent, non-partisan organization to investigate and recommend how a proportional electoral system should be implemented in Ontario

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Green Party of Ontario would collaborate with other parties to ensure timely implementation of reforms, and if an incremental approach is adopted, should find a formula to maintain momentum beyond the first step.

Sponsors

Name	Riding	Member? (for staff to fill out only)
Matt Welke	Toronto—St. Paul's	Y
Michelle Petersen	Orléans	Y
Jacqueline Cribb	North Huron	Y
Samantha Jarman	Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston	Y
Gerry Hobden	Don Valley East	Y
Kyle Hutton	Burlington	Y
Christopher Navarro-Canseco	Oxford	Y
Gokul Ullas	Davenport	Y
David Weber	Kitchener South - Hespeler	Y
Judy Gilchrist	Parry Sound - Muskoka	Y
John Geale	Northumberland-Peterborough South	Y
Rod Philpot	Brantford-Brant	Y
Don Booth	Beaches - East York	Y
Ann-Marie Westgate	Willowdale	Y
Harmon Pope	Ottawa-Vanier	Y
Dara Kennedy	Peterborough Kawartha	Y
Fiona Jager	LGTIRL	Y
Steve Gabell	LGTIRL	Y
Robert Gibson	Kingston and the Islands	Y
Tree Rost	Sudbury	Y

Background

The current policy of unilaterally legislating a change to an ill-defined proportional representation (PR) system without a clear policy directive is unrealistic and problematic for several reasons. First, it lacks a clear mandate—voters need to know the specific changes a party plans to implement, and without this, accountability and transparency suffer. Electoral reform is a very complex issue and requires expertise; expecting MPPs to decide on a PR model without detailed guidance invites political/partisan pressures over thorough analysis. Broad public support is crucial; without it, the reform risks the same fate as the 2007 citizens' assembly and subsequent failed referendum. Last, trust and consistency are key—voters must trust that the decision-making process is guided by clear, long-term democratic principles, not self-serving partisan/political interests in the short-term.

In a recent EKOS poll on electoral reform, the vast majority of Canadians expressed support for the citizens' assembly idea, including 91% of Green voters.

Values

Participatory Democracy
Respect for Diversity

Impact

This policy applies to the provincial government, with potential impacts on municipal governments if the reform expands to local levels.

Support

Support may come from voters, democracy advocates, electoral reform organizations, and those disillusioned with first-past-the-post elections. It could benefit citizens seeking more accurate representation.

Opposition

Opposition might come from parties benefiting from the current system or those skeptical of citizen-led initiatives. Some might view it as unnecessary or risky.

Risks

There's moderate reputational risk from parties satisfied with the current system. The Green Party of Ontario may face resistance if the citizens' assembly's recommendations are seen as controversial.

Consultations

Consulted organizations include democracy reform groups and political scientists. Feedback highlighted the importance of independent, nonpartisan leadership and public education to ensure legitimacy and informed citizen participation.

References

<https://www.fairvote.ca/onca/>

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<https://reasonstobecheerful.world/citizens-assemblies-democracy-potential/>

<https://journal.queenslaw.ca/sites/qljwww/files/Issues/Vol%2038%20i1/7.%20Pal.pdf>

<https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/october-2023/citizens-assembly-democracy/>

<https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/campaigns/democratic-innovations/>