

# Caledon Citizen

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## Covering all of Caledon

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## Electoral reform: how much is really needed?

One of the silliest things we've witnessed since the Ontario Liberals came to power in the 2003 provincial election was the appointment of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, with a mandate to propose changes in our traditional "first past the post" system of electing members of the Legislature.

But silly as that might have been, sillier yet is the proposal the 103-member Citizens' Assembly has come up with, which we shall all be asked to consider at the Oct. 10 general election.

Formally called a Mixed Member Proportional system, the proposal would involve adding new seats to the Legislature whose occupants would be elected indirectly - or more likely appointed - and would not represent any constituency.

The objective is to give more representation to small parties in a province that for many decades has had just three with any meaningful number of MPPs, but which in the last two decades has seen all three parties form majority governments while typically garnering less than half the 60-odd per cent of eligible voters who bother to cast ballots.

Under the scheme, one in four members of the Legislature - 39 of 129 - wouldn't be elected. They would, instead, be nominated by their respective parties, in all likelihood appointed by party managers.

Supporters of the scheme say the parties would be able to nominate representatives of under-represented groups such as women, visible minorities and ethnic groups. And smaller alliances, such as the Green, Christian Heritage and Communist parties would be guaranteed seats if they managed to get 3% of the popular vote.

But while there would be some representation for most, if not all, political parties, those groups perhaps most in need of being represented at Queen's Park - the poor, the homeless, the under-educated, the mentally disabled - won't benefit.

However, that's not our only concern about the proposal, which we fervently hope will be shot down by the electorate or at least not implemented by whatever party wins the election.

It's now clear that one of the most astute

moves by the Mike Harris Conservatives was the Fewer Politicians Act of 1996, which sharply reduced the number of seats in the Legislature by adopting the federal constituency names and boundaries.

Although that initially cut the number of seats from 130 to 103, a federal redistribution since then has increased the number to 107 and a proposed new one would add another handful of ridings.

But the big bonus has been that in Ontario (alone among the provinces) we have both simplicity and consistency.

Locally, we are finally bidding adieu to what must be one of Canada's "most gerrymandered" ridings, that of Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, and come October our MPP and MP David Tilson will both be representing the 115,000 residents of Dufferin County and the Town of Caledon.

Not so if the Citizens' Assembly has its way.

Under the proposal, the provincial constituencies would actually be far larger than the federal ones - totalling just 90!

Locally, we might find ourselves residing in the new riding of Dufferin-Caledon-Wellington-Grey-Simcoe, containing some 150,000 residents - roughly 10,000 more than live in the province of Prince Edward Island.

The proposed "reform" would see everyone casting two ballots, one for the local member and one for a party. Once all the votes had been tabulated, the 39 at large seats would be awarded based on the extent to which any of the parties happened to be under-represented, the aim being to have a Legislature where each party would have roughly the same percentage of seats as their percentage of the over-all popular vote.

Whatever the present systems failings, one of its strengths lies in the constituency system, which allows an individual candidate to get elected on the basis of his or her personality and work for the riding rather than the political banner being carried.

As we see it, a small touch of electoral reform is really all that thoughtful Ontarians should be prepared to stomach.

And we still see wisdom in the adage, *if it ain't broke, don't fix it.*

## Poll: Tory growth will require thinking outside the box.



## Our Readers Write

### Clarification from gravel group

I'm writing to correct Penny Richardson's letter that appeared May 23. Your readers are best served when they have complete and accurate information.

First, James Dick Construction's OSSGA Environmental Achievement Award was in recognition of a hydraulic buffer at its Caledon Sand & Gravel site, designed to protect a wetland, and not for rehabilitation as Ms. Richardson states. The Environmental Achievement Award recognizes OSSGA members that have developed and successfully implemented industry-leading policies, programs or projects that make positive contributions to the environment in order to raise member awareness on environmental issues and motivate leadership within the industry.

Second, I'm pleased to report that there have been noticeable increases in rehabilitation in the past four years. Compared to earlier periods, the amount of area being rehabilitated has more than doubled, according to The Ontario Aggregate Resources Corporation.

On the issue of MNR resources, staffing is being increased and program budgets are receiving an influx of new money from a 92% increase in the licence fee paid by aggregate producers. Enforcement is up; MNR field staff suspended licences 34 times last year, issued rehabilitation orders on 21 occasions, and convictions and fines are up significantly. The industry welcomes this higher degree of scrutiny.

Finally, OSSGA's awards are judged by a review jury comprised of members of our Community Relations and Rehabilitation Committee, and no member ever is involved in passing judgment on their own award, as Ms. Richardson suggests.

Our industry produces stone, sand and gravel which are essential to the economic and environmental prosperity of this province. We take a great deal of pride in our

industry advancement awards program which promotes best practices, and recognizes members who demonstrate leadership in protecting our natural resources for generations to come. For more information on our industry and our awards program, please visit our Web site at [www.ontarioSSGA.com](http://www.ontarioSSGA.com).

*Carol Hochu*, President  
Ontario Stone, Sand & Gravel Association

### NIMBY alive and well

I thought Bolton and Caledon wanted to regain that small-town feeling. But it seems that a few, like Ms Chilko, want the NIMBY attitude.

What do I mean by NIMBY? It seems that people want kids to cut the grass, but not help out in the community. I really take offence to this type of thinking.

We are ALL responsible for this community and should be proud of those who help to make it a special one. People complained that they did not want buses because it would bring "those" people in. I think "those" people are already here as they cannot see what a caring community is all about.

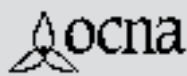
I found the recent letters very disturbing as I spent five years in Cadets and found it to be very educational and enjoyable, but to call those who help to serve in your community "beggars" is, at the very least, insulting.

To show how much we care, I proposed a special day during the last municipal election that everyone walk up to a stranger and shake their hand and introduce yourself. The day I suggest is June 21. Let's be proud of who we are and where we live.

I think "those" people should reconsider living in a caring community because this type of thinking is NIMBY.

*Darren Parberry*

## Caledon Citizen



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