

Referendum Resource Officers in the 2007 Ontario Referendum on Electoral Reform

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On October 10th, 2007, Ontarians were given the unique opportunity to vote on a proposed change to their electoral system in a province-wide referendum. If passed, the proposal would replace the province's current system of First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) with a new Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) system. However, when the votes were counted, the electoral reform proposal was soundly defeated. The referendum failed to pass the threshold of at least 60% support province-wide and 50% support in 60% of the ridings. Only 36.9% of Ontarians voted for the MMP system, and it earned majority support in only five ridings.¹ Although a Strategic Council poll reported that in the last week before the election, 76% of electors knew about the proposed changes² and Elections Ontario's post-election survey reported that 83% of electors were aware of the referendum,³ many commentators and academics still blamed the failure of MMP on the quality of the education campaign. Two weeks after the referendum date, political scientists Fred Cutler and Patrick Fournier wrote in the *Globe and Mail* that although citizens said they knew about the referendum, "useful knowledge about the proposal was rare."⁴

The responsibility of providing information to the public on the referendum proposal fell on Ontario's non-partisan election administrative agency. Elections Ontario was instructed by the government to "ensure that electors throughout Ontario receive clear and impartial information... about the referendum"⁵ and therefore launched a Provincial Referendum Education Program (PREP), comprising of advertisements, an information hotline, a website, and public outreach activities. While advertisements and websites are common with the education campaigns of other jurisdictions, Elections Ontario's public outreach element contained a unique program of grassroots education through local liaison officers. Elections Ontario chose to hire one Referendum Resource Officer (RRO) for each electoral district, who were tasked with providing referendum information through presentations and public meetings in their communities.⁶ It was

the first time an elections management body (EMB) had decided to reach out to every electoral district through a local information officer.

This paper examines the feedback of nearly one-third of these RROs collected through telephone and email interviews. Many of these RROs felt that the referendum education program fell short of its aim to provide local education on the referendum question and made suggestions as to the reasons behind the shortcomings of Ontario's referendum education campaign. They commented that their work was not supported by appropriate timelines, budgets and materials. In addition, many were displeased with the restrictions placed on RROs in efforts of keep the Elections Ontario campaign neutral. This ultimately limited the ability of RROs to provide the information that would allow their audiences to form opinions on the referendum issue, rather than simply know that a referendum would be taking place. This case study supports previous referendum education and voting research that demonstrates that referendum education campaigns should not only provide timely and accessible information, but also encourage debate in order to provide citizens with the competence needed to make their "big decision."⁷ This paper also suggests a number of recommendations for future referendum education campaigns.

Approaches to Understanding Voter Competence in Referendums

A common problem with referendums is that citizens lack the knowledge to make good decisions, especially since referendums often touch on unfamiliar issues and may not clearly divide the populace along party lines.⁸ Therefore, electors must rely on the information gleaned from the preceding referendum campaign when making their decisions. It is common during these campaigns that many voters, for lack of timing, interest or political literacy, will not be able to condense the great amount of election information into a logical vote choice. In *The*

Reasoning Voter, Popkin explains that voters do not act like statisticians, who can easily and logically process the political information they receive and calculate a vote.⁹ Instead, voters will look for heuristics, cues or shortcuts in order to make their decision at the polls. However, during referendum campaigns, these shortcuts are not necessarily as apparent, especially if political parties have not taken clear positions on the issue, or if interest groups themselves are unsure of where they stand on the referendum question. Voters are also unable to take other traditional cues, such as perception of candidates' characteristics, during referendums where there may not be an individual representing each side of the debate. Referendums on electoral reform will often have the additional problem of being on an issue that most voters do not consider on a daily basis, or will not greatly affect their daily life. Voters may not have even considered electoral systems change before the referendum.

Therefore, the education campaigns by elections administrators or government-appointed panels become so crucial to the referendum. Public education campaigns, especially dealing with unfamiliar referendum questions need to focus on giving the voter "competence" rather than just encyclopaedic information that Popkin's unrealistic statistician voter would use. As Lupia and Johnston write, "competence is the ability to make accurate predictions; information is data."¹⁰ In order to make choices, voters do not need to know every detail about the intricacies of the policy proposal; however, they do need appropriate information to take the right shortcuts as they would do in any election campaign.¹¹ Referendums can provide a particularly unique opportunity for citizens to engage in policy decisions in referendums, but only if citizens are equipped with the competence to make good decisions.¹² For this reason, the information campaigns during referendums are especially important.¹³

Moreover, the quality of an education campaign during a referendum can have an impact on the outcome of the vote. On issues such as electoral reform there remains a danger that an “information barrier,”¹⁴ or lack of public awareness, can skew the results towards the status quo. As Lawrence LeDuc explains, “the NO side frequently possesses a considerable advantage, and negative campaign tactics are often effective, particularly in the media. YES campaigners on the other hand need to ‘educate’ as well as persuade an often sceptical and poorly informed public to support change.”¹⁵ This idea that the NO side will have an advantage when the public is poorly informed is supported by a study conducted by Laura Stephenson and Brian Tanguay on the 2007 Ontario Referendum on Electoral Reform.¹⁶ Their survey found that those who knew more about the referendum proposal were more likely to vote for reform. Again, they demonstrate that an “information deficit” can skew results in favour of the status quo.¹⁷ Therefore, a better understanding of various referendum public information strategies, as well as the challenges that elections administrators face, can also help us understand the results of referendums.

Ontario’s Referendum on Electoral Reform

Ontario’s foray into the question of electoral reform following two unsuccessful referendums in British Columbia and Prince Edward Island. Following the Ontario Liberal Party’s election to majority government in 2003, the new Premier, Dalton McGuinty, established a Democratic Renewal Secretariat, which, among other things, aimed at facilitating an exploration of alternative electoral systems.¹⁸ The Ontario Legislature’s Select Committee on Electoral Reform was charged with outlining the terms of this discussion, which would model British Columbia’s Citizens’ Assembly and referendum.¹⁹ After eight months of deliberation, the Ontario Citizens’ Assembly proposed a new MMP electoral system to be voted upon in a referendum during the 2007 provincial election. MMP was described as a way to renew

democracy in Ontario, through “strong local representation..., increase[d] voter choice and... fairer election results.”²⁰

A referendum bill (Bill 155, the *Electoral System Referendum Act*) was introduced in the Ontario Legislature on October 24, 2006 that stipulated that the decision of the Citizens’ Assembly would be put to a province-wide referendum concurrent with the 2007 Provincial Election.²¹ A further bill was introduced on April 15, 2007 that gave the responsibility of public education to the Chief Electoral Officer, through Elections Ontario. The Bill stipulated that

The Chief Electoral Officer shall conduct a program of public education, to ensure that electors throughout Ontario receive clear and impartial information about, (a) the referendum process, the date of the referendum and the referendum question; and (b) the content of the choices in the referendum.²²

In consultation with their counterparts in British Columbia and New Zealand, where similar referendums on electoral reform had previously taken place, as well as academics, public relations professionals and electors, Elections Ontario decided on a multi-pronged approach to their referendum education campaign. Called PREP (Provincial Referendum Education Project), the neutral informational campaign focused on the slogans “Understand the question” and “It’s a big decision”.²³ The campaign aimed at raising awareness that a referendum on electoral reform would be taking place in Ontario and directing electors to other Elections Ontario destinations for more information. The entire program was budgeted to cost \$6 825 000, however the final total of expenditures was \$7 895 000.²⁴

Many of the aspects of the PREP program resembled elements of the public education campaigns in New Zealand, British Columbia and Prince Edward Island. The first element of the PREP program was a series of three information pieces to be distributed by mail. Two were householders sent directly to electors, while the third was inserted into the Notice of Registration Card that each elector received prior to the election.²⁵ The second element included advertising

on television, radio and print, which consumed nearly half the total budget of referendum expenditures.²⁶ Third, Elections Ontario prepared an internet strategy, that included a website, interactive video and internet advertising.²⁷

Recognizing that the public advertising strategies that had occurred in other Canadian jurisdictions were criticized for failing to provide the sort of broad public knowledge of the referendum as they were intended,²⁸ Elections Ontario added one unique aspect to their Referendum campaign strategy: the hiring of Referendum Resource Officers to perform community outreach. The program, costing \$580 000, was aimed at bringing the education campaign to local communities through “face-to-face contact and information sharing.”²⁹ One RRO was hired in 106 of the 107 electoral districts.³⁰ Although it was intended that each of the 107 provincial ridings would have one RRO, the riding of Hamilton Centre did not have an RRO as of the launch of the writ. Consequently, the riding was covered by two neighbouring RROs.

The program was designed to give Elections Ontario’s referendum campaign a physical and personal presence in each riding “to ensure their information reached electors in communities throughout the province.”³¹ Elections Ontario instructed RROs to “contact local service groups and community interest groups; Raise awareness of the referendum and the referendum question; Direct individuals to the resources available to learn more; Maintain a neutral position in all of their communications.”³² In doing so, the RRO program would produce a more localized referendum campaign with the aim of better educating the public. Since RROs were hired locally, they would be better able to reach communities groups that an outside liaison officer may not consider contacting. They would also have the local knowledge to know where and when to reach the greatest number and variety of individuals. Furthermore, the program would provide communities with an individual they could turn to for more information about the

referendum question. After the referendum, Elections Ontario explained that “for many electors, the ability to associate a face with the referendum message proved to be a significant feature of the program.”³³

Methodology

Through interviews with 30 of the 106 RROs, from both urban and rural communities, Northern and Southern Ontario, and for a variety of professions and ages, it is possible to gain an understanding of the challenges Referendum Resource Officers faced while presenting an education program during Ontario’s referendum on electoral reform. Each of the interviews took place over telephone or email during the month of June, 2011. The telephone interviews lasted between ten minutes and one hour, and covered RROs’ experiences from their initial inquiry into the position to their post-election reflections. Many of the RROs interviewed were retired from professions such as teaching, business and publishing. Some were recently graduated university students, while others worked in consulting or community activism. The most prevalent profession among the RROs interviewed was education, as one third identified themselves as former educators. RROs ranged in age from 22 to 74,³⁴ although of those interviewed only six were under the age of 50. A full list of RROs interviewed, including the name and riding of RROs who chose not to remain anonymous, is available in Appendix 1. While interviewing RROs, it became clear that several important challenges were commonly faced by RROs of different background and regions. Their input echoes some of the key considerations that the *IDEA Handbook of Direct Democracy* recommends be taken into consideration regarding the administration of referendums, namely the timing of the referendum and the communication of information to the public.³⁵ This consideration of the problems that arose with both the localized and province-wide referendum education campaign therefore provides a case study supporting a

number of key recommendations towards providing more effective referendum education campaigns.

Timing

The timing of the referendum campaign was a problem for two main reasons. Firstly, Elections Ontario and RROs criticized the short timeframe with which they were allotted to prepare and present a comprehensive education campaign. Secondly, the timing of the referendum concurrent with a general election proved to be a great challenge for politicians, EMBs and RROs.

Before the referendum was even a certainty, Elections Ontario knew they would be constrained by the short timeframe in which they could conduct their education campaign. In their final report on the 2007 Referendum on Electoral Reform, Elections Ontario calls the education campaign a 168-day journey, that began with the First Reading of Bill 218, the *Election Statute Law Amendment Act of 2007*, and ended on the October 10th Election and Referendum Day. Throughout the report, Elections Ontario emphasizes their tight timelines for conducting an education campaign. Elections Ontario officials noted that the inspiration for their education campaign came from the successful New Zealand case, but were unable to replicate it in Ontario. “One key difference,” the report notes, “... was the approximate two-year preparation period in New Zealand compared with the 168 days available in Ontario.”³⁶ Elections Ontario was limited by the fact that they were only certain a referendum would take place on May 15th, when the final report of the Citizens’ Assembly was released and could only seriously begin their campaign planning on June 4th, when Bill 218 was passed.

This limited timeframe also affected the RROs, whose employment period lasted less

than two months. When asked what changes they would make to the RRO program, 22 of the 30 RROs expressed frustration that the short timeline limited their ability to perform their education duties.³⁷ One RRO mentioned “...to believe that you could educate a population in a month and half on issues that most of them had never even considered before was naive.”³⁸ Another explained that the short timeline left not only RROs with a difficult job, but that voters similarly were not given “enough time to fully understand the issue,” and, more importantly, there was no time “to enter into discussions with others about it.”³⁹ Thus, even if voters were able to learn about the technical aspects of the referendum during the campaign, they had little time to discuss the issue with others and form opinions on the subject. For some RROs, this proved to be a “major bone of contention with many people in the audiences.”⁴⁰ When asked how long the ideal campaign would be, RROs suggested that the education campaign could have lasted at least 6 months prior to the vote, in order to give voters time to consider the question.⁴¹

More specifically, many RROs mentioned that lead-time restrictions limited the possible presentation venues. Charged with making presentations about the referendum to places such as community group meetings, seniors’ residences, places of worship and community festivals,⁴² RROs found that when they began calling groups to book presentations at the end of August, the groups’ schedules for September and October were often already filled. One RRO recalls, “The larger places... like the service clubs... they’ll book their speakers months in advance, although they said... if we’d had notice...”⁴³ Thus, the short lead-time was not consistent with the stated aims of the RRO program to visit a large number of service clubs and other community groups.

Governments and EMBs therefore need the foresight to begin the education campaign months before the writ is dropped, both through the promotion of media awareness about the major referendum issues and by allowing local representatives to begin speaking about the

referendum to their communities much earlier. Considering their education mandate was only announced less than six months prior to the referendum date, the burden of timing was not the responsibility of Elections Ontario. Instead, there needs to be the political will at the governmental level to begin the electoral reform process earlier.

Not only was Elections Ontario faced with the task of creating and executing a referendum education campaign in a very short period of time, but they were also required to do so whilst also preparing for a regularly scheduled provincial election on the same day. One of the concerns that arose during the Select Committee on Electoral Reform hearings regarding holding the referendum alongside the provincial election, rather than as a stand-alone referendum, was that political parties and voters would most likely focus on the general election campaigns, rather than the referendum. When discussing the referendum, Chief Electoral Officer John Hollins asked the committee members: “When people come to the poll in the next election, do you want them to be thinking about voting for you or voting about a referendum?”⁴⁴ noting that the emphasis would most likely be placed on the provincial election campaigns, rather than the referendum. This challenge was magnified for Elections Ontario, which explains in its referendum report that,

When Bill 218 was introduced, Elections Ontario was already ramping up to the final stages of event preparation for the first fixed-date general election. Consequently, the available resources were fully deployed. Principal operational activities included the development and implementation of new technical and operating systems, implementing new electoral division boundaries for 107 electoral districts, and training 107 returning officers, 85 of them new. Staff was also committed to the normal pre-event activities related to electoral district and headquarters staffing, facility rental, supplies design and procurement, elector register updates, maps and the related logistics.⁴⁵

Elections Ontario was faced with two large tasks, organizing and educating the public for an election and a referendum, during the same time period.

RROs also had to deal with this issue of having a concurrent referendum and election. RROs were to have a desk, telephone and access to information technology at the Returning Office in their riding. Most noted that their riding's Returning Officer attempted to comply with these requirements for RROs, but were simply too busy or concerned with the election campaign to make special accommodations. Some mentioned that finding physical space for RROs was difficult, since local Elections Ontario office space had already been rented and allocated before the Returning Officer was aware that RROs would also need access to the space. One RRO recalls having a corner by the kitchen to use.⁴⁶ Another explained that halfway through the campaign her desk was taken up as storage space.⁴⁷ However, the vast majority worked from their own home, some out of convenience, others because the space was simply not available at their returning office. Issues with telephone lines, fax machines and printers also arose, as the Returning Office predominately functioned as an election office. One RRO recalls,

We were told that we would have an office with a phone and access to a photocopier and a fax machine... at the returning office. They didn't bother to tell the returning officer that... Some returning officers were very welcoming and very supportive...but I know that some people had a lot of difficulty... most [Returning Officers] had already rented their space when we arrived on their doorsteps... in some places they literally had no physical space to give [RROs]... it was all blocked out and allocated before... they'd ever heard of us.⁴⁸

Five other RROs mentioned similar responses when they first met their local Returning Officer.⁴⁹

While it was required that space and equipment be used for both the referendum and election campaign, other requirements that the referendum and election remain separate caused confusion and difficulty among RROs and Returning Officers. While many Returning Offices

were keen on forwarding questions about the referendum to their RRO, two of the interviewed RROs recall wanting to make presentations for the employees at their local Returning Offices, but trying to keep the referendum and election separate, the Returning Officer refused to allow them to do a presentation for the staff.⁵⁰ Another RRO recounts that the office staff at the Returning Office were openly hostile to the referendum: “even the provincial Returning Officer gave me a hard time. He and his assistant (elections clerk) felt that Elections Ontario hadn’t explained the referendum enough and they both proudly told me that they were going to leave their referendum ballots blank!”⁵¹

Conducting the referendum and election at the same time not only caused problems for their own work, but many RROs also noted that at the same time it caused confusion and distraction for the public as well. As one RRO explained,

In 2007, the funding of religious schools in Ontario appeared to dominate the political discourse and seemed to overshadow the debate over the referendum question. As a consequence, it was a challenge for any referendum resource officer to raise general awareness about the official referendum on the electoral system when the political parties were waging an informal referendum on the funding of religious schools.⁵²

Just as Ontario’s Chief Electoral Officer John Hollins had forewarned, RROs felt that their message was overshadowed by the provincial election.

One common example of the challenge of presenting a referendum education campaign at the same time as the provincial election campaign can be epitomized by many RROs’ experiences presenting about the referendum to the audiences at all-candidates debates. Originally, all-candidates debates were not included on the list of approved presentation locations. Indeed, RROs were prohibited from presenting at “MPPs or candidate’s town hall meetings,”⁵³ for fear that the referendum would become embroiled in the politics of the local

election campaign. However, many RROs found that their best opportunities for large crowds and diverse audiences were these candidates' meetings.⁵⁴ Elections Ontario did end up allowing RROs to present at debates, but only if they spoke prior to the start of the debate. RROs noted that they were not usually allowed time for questions, and were required to leave before any debates got underway. Elections Ontario explained that this was necessary to ensure that RROs did not become a perceived 'expert' during an intense debate.⁵⁵ However, they also consequently had little opportunity to answer questions and discuss the referendum with voters. One RRO explained that she felt "lost in the shuffle" at all-candidates' meetings.⁵⁶ Another lamented a missed opportunity to answer questions.⁵⁷

Therefore, for optimum education and awareness, the referendum should be held apart from a general election. Indeed, Canada's federal *Referendum Act* encourages the same: "Where writs of election at a general election are issued during the period beginning on the day on which writs of referendum are issued and ending on polling day at the referendum, the writs of referendum shall be deemed to be withdrawn on the day on which the writs of election are issued."⁵⁸ This policy stipulates that a referendum cannot be held concurrently with a general election. Although holding the referendum during a general election costs less and could potentially increase voter turnout, in the Ontario case, many RROs noted that elections issues overshadowed the electoral reform question. A referendum separate from a general election may also encourage political parties to become more involved in the campaign, as their attention and finances are not concentrated on re-election.

Another potential solution, should moving the date of the referendum to a non-election day is not possible, would be to put the public education campaign in the hands of an independent body separate from the regular elections administrator. This was done in New

Zealand for their 1992 pre-referendum and 1993 referendum on MMP. An Independent Electoral Referendum Panel was formed to administrate the referendum's public education campaign and was led by five prominent public servants and academics, whose sole responsibility was referendum education.⁵⁹ This can be contrasted with Elections Ontario's staff which had to administer a general election (which included a public education campaign about the voting procedures for the provincial election) as well as a referendum education campaign. Limited time was available for staff to oversee referendum projects. The RRO program, for example, was overseen by one contract staff member, who managed the activities of all 106 part-time RROs.⁶⁰ Having a specific body responsible for public education is especially important when there is a concurrent general election.

Materials and Budget

In addition to problems with the timeframe of the referendum education campaign, many RROs also found troubles with the materials and budgets Elections Ontario supplied them. The materials provided were criticized for being provided too late and for their lack of dynamic elements and variety. Budgets, including both a lack of hours and a lack of funds available for hall and technology rentals, were also a serious problem for many RROs.

All of the RROs interviewed commented on the materials they were provided with in order to fulfill their duties. Each RRO was provided with brochures, posters and a presentation on DVD, PowerPoint, overhead transparencies and a 35mm slide deck.⁶¹ This material was developed by the public relations firm Grey Worldwide, with the advice of academics and input of focus groups.⁶² Because of the timeline restrictions, the materials were not all ready for the launch of the campaign at the end of August. RROs remember being sent copies of the

presentation that were still being updated, even after they had made presentations.⁶³ One RRO called this a problem of materials being “half-baked” before they were sent out to RROs.⁶⁴ Another RRO recalls having scheduled a presentation at a local church for the end of August. Without a full set of materials, he was nervous about presenting, until the slides arrived an hour before his first scheduled presentation.⁶⁵ This problem was especially tough for those making presentations in French. The finalized script and slides for the French presentation only arrived in RROs email inboxes on September 11, 2007, less than a month before the referendum date.⁶⁶

The final version of the presentation provided by Elections Ontario, that the RROs were instructed not to deviate from to remove any potential bias, was another cause of frustration. The presentation featured text-heavy slides, with few diagrams or animation. One RRO mentioned that the “the PowerPoint presentation was a series of static slides... it seemed to me that whoever did the PowerPoint didn’t understand the capability of PowerPoint.”⁶⁷ Many RROs suggested the need for graphics and animation to make the difficult material more accessible and even exciting to watch.⁶⁸

Similarly, many RROs found their audiences confused by the brochures that were distributed both in their mailboxes and at the presentations.⁶⁹ One RRO explained that “Everyone - homeless to bankers to grade-school to PhD - complained about brochures.”⁷⁰ Another mentioned, “The layout of the posters and the pamphlets was text-heavy with technical information that seemed designed for an audience of university-educated political science scholars. Citizens with little or no understanding of Ontario’s electoral system remarked that the posters and pamphlets seemed to resemble a credit card agreement.”⁷¹ He recalls members of the audience complaining that the brochure was not easy to understand.

Pedagogical problems were among the most common complaints among RROs about the materials with which they were provided. Elections Ontario was aware of the potential for this problem and had the materials reviewed by a literacy consultant, who evaluated the materials to be at a grade 12 reading level. Elections Ontario's Referendum Report explains that

They attempted a rewrite that reduced the materials to a Grade 6.5 reading level, however, in simplifying the language, some of the concepts became inaccurate, confused or unclear. The consultant acknowledged that, even after the rewrite to simplify the language, the intellectual content of the MMP materials was at least at a Grade 9.⁷²

Many RROs found this high level of literacy prevented them from using the tools effectively.⁷³ One RRO, a retired teacher, commented that the materials "pedagogically weren't designed by educators."⁷⁴ As a solution to this common problem, RROs suggested that there needed to be a variety of materials for different literacy levels. One RRO described the time he presented to a group of developmentally disabled voters and became frustrated with the lack of materials at different levels to accommodate different audiences.⁷⁵ An urban RRO suggested that five or six tools be available for different levels of election literacy, in a minimum of English and French and perhaps more languages for her multilingual riding.⁷⁶

Resources should therefore be dedicated to the creation of additional materials of different levels, which RROs could use for diverse audiences throughout the campaign. Some RROs were able to adapt their presentations to the needs of different language communities and audiences. However, with such a short timeframe for education, the process of translating or adapting material and having it approved cut into the RROs' allotted hours and was not always feasible. In preparation for the referendum education campaign, high-quality materials should be created for areas and audiences without internet accesses,⁷⁷ for children and youth, for those with a high degree of civic literacy and those without. Educational tools with language more

accessible for those whose first language is not English or French should also be created, whether in a broader range of languages, or more appropriate for ESL students. Since RROs are the grassroots educators of the referendum, they should be equipped to make presentations according to their audiences' needs.

RROs also wished they had been provided with budgets to rent audio-visual technology, book halls, advertise for presentations and spend more hours working in their riding. Firstly, access to the technology necessary to use the materials provided was also a common complaint among RROs. When asked what materials they used most often, eleven of the interviewed RROs explained that they could not use the electronic-based media provided by Elections Ontario.⁷⁸ Since they were not provided computers or projectors, RROs could frequently not use electronic media unless the venue had that technology already available. In the words of three different RROs, they had to “beg and borrow”⁷⁹ the equipment necessary to make their presentations. One RRO recalls having to borrow an overhead projector from a local school: “I prayed that the bulb wouldn't burn out, it is expensive to replace. I did give a new bulb to the school (money out of my pocket) when I returned the projector.”⁸⁰ Another RRO recalls,

I felt that I needed the powerpoint the most as many of my presentations were to large groups. The maddening thing was that I was not given a laptop and an external projector. The response was that the service group would have this available which is not the case as we live in a rural area and access even to rentals was not doable. I rented a laptop on my own and begged and borrowed a projector for the presentations. This was stressful and time consuming. The overhead transparencies were not useful in that I was not provided with an overhead projector. I was told to borrow one from a local school. The local schools did have them but they were all welded on to permanent stands and were not portable... At the time, I did not own a small tv and dvd player and a really long extension cord [either].⁸¹

Finding the appropriate technology was a great concern for many RROs.

Many RROs wished they had been given budgets to rent equipment, book halls and meeting rooms and advertise upcoming presentations. One RRO explained that “It was quite clear that we had to... figure out how best to “reach” all the electors in our riding without any budget! There was no money to rent halls, run ads or print flyers.”⁸² Some desired to reach those not involved in service groups, clubs or residences and could not do so without a larger budget to set up their own public meetings on the referendum question. This brought up a common frustration of many RROs that their position was not supported with the appropriate budgets.

For some RROs, there was a discrepancy between the billable hours allotted and the hours required to complete the job.⁸³ Although a few weeks into the campaign RROs were budgeted 50% more hours, some found that they were met with backlash for performing more than a part-time job.⁸⁴ One RRO explained: “A lot of people... ended up working essentially for free for a whole lot of time... we were never told a maximum number, but then when you put in your weekly hours at some point people were told...that [they] couldn’t work that many hours a week.”⁸⁵ Similar stories were reported by six other RROs, who explained that, in order to track down and make presentations for all interested groups, the program should have had additional RROs or should have hired RROs to be full-time workers during the campaign period.⁸⁶

Working only part-time, the RROs were unable to reach the percentage of the population they desired to speak to. RROs with geographically larger electoral districts also noted that this problem was compounded by having to drive across their ridings, which would take up a significant amount of their time.⁸⁷ Elections Ontario’s Final Report on the Referendum gives an accumulated estimate that RROs provided of the number of people they reached, which was 338 293 people,⁸⁸ which most likely included those the RROs reached through media interviews and publications as well.⁸⁹ This is less than 3% of the population.⁹⁰ One RRO explains that Elections

Ontario was “caught... off guard. There were a lot of places that really... wanted this information so if they could have doubled the amount of print and doubled the amount of hours we worked, we still wouldn’t have gotten to everybody.”⁹¹

Information Neutrality

Despite these limited materials and budgets, RROs scheduled their time to make presentations about electoral reform to their local populations. However, maintaining impartiality while also providing useful information and sparking local discussion was a challenge. Indeed, Elections Ontario was faced with the nearly insurmountable task of presenting an alternative electoral system without appearing to endorse it. During their RRO training, impartiality and neutrality was emphasized.⁹² The RROs recall being provided with a strict script from which they were instructed not to deviate. RROs were described by Elections Ontario as “providers of, and conduits for scripted general referendum information.”⁹³ This proved to be a difficult rule to follow for many RROs who wished to adapt the presentation for their audiences. One RRO explained, “When you’re singing from the songbook, you can’t truly explain it.”⁹⁴ She explained that the best educators need to interact with their audience and answer questions with different wording and examples. However, many RROs felt they did not have the freedom to do so. Without the opportunity to hear a full explanation from RROs, participants would turn to others in the audience to explain it to them. RROs found this to be a major problem, because when other audience members were left with the responsibility of explaining those unanswered questions, the neutrality of the information was corrupted.⁹⁵ Although the RROs understood that Elections Ontario wanted the material to remain consistent, some found this strict script to be a detriment to the end goal of the campaign to educate people neutrally.

This problem was exacerbated when it came time for question and answer periods. RROs were provided with a list of frequently asked questions with answers, and were told not to answer other questions but to direct participants to the website or an information hotline number set up for the referendum and election. However, this remained unsatisfactory for some participants, which put RROs in uncomfortable situations, especially since their role was specifically designed to provide a local person, rather than an anonymous phone number or website, with whom electors could discuss the referendum.⁹⁶ For example, one RRO explained that some audience members “were angry with me because they had questions and I was telling them to call an 800-number... and they know you know, they know you have the answer to their question but you’re not giving it to them.”⁹⁷ She also remembers some participants who specifically came to the presentation because they were unsatisfied with the explanation from the 1-800-number and were disappointed when the RRO had the same scripted answer to the question.⁹⁸ To other questions without scripted answers, RROs had the uncomfortable position of having to answer that “we haven’t developed a response to that particular question yet”⁹⁹ and hope the answer would become available before the referendum. One RRO felt that “all they trained us to do was to give information, sequentially, on a very superficial level.”¹⁰⁰ Another recalls being told during training, “You’re paid to do; you’re not paid to think.”¹⁰¹ RROs felt they were unable to explain answers to common questions in their own words and with language that would best suit their audiences.

For example, one of the most common complaints that RROs received was that they were unable to fully answer the question “What will it cost?”¹⁰² By September 11, Elections Ontario had formulated an answer:

If the referendum results in a vote in favour of Mixed Member Proportional, by December 31st, 2008, the new government would have to introduce a law to make Mixed Member Proportional Ontario's new system. When the law is introduced and considered by the legislature, electors will be able to ask questions and debate the costs of the new system. The precise cost of the new system would depend on the details of the law and is a question that will have to be asked of the future government.¹⁰³

For some RROs, this response amounted to the same answer as before: we don't know. Another common question was what formula would be used to allocate seats in the new MMP system. Again, RROs could not provide an answer or any examples of what it would look like with the exact seat calculations.¹⁰⁴ Northern RROs were often faced with the question of how it would affect their region.¹⁰⁵ Once again, the materials with which they were provided did not answer the question. Faced with the tight restrictions from Elections Ontario, RROs were unable to satisfyingly answer these and similar questions. One RRO explains the common response they received when unable to answer these questions, "How can we vote and approve... something that you don't know?"¹⁰⁶ Another found that "[Elections Ontario] really wouldn't allow us to be totally informative... they didn't want to really take the discussion to the ultimate conclusion. It seemed to me that it's being dishonest... don't try and pretend that you're giving people the full story when you're not."¹⁰⁷ Answering questions from a script was therefore a challenging direction for some RROs to follow.

Because of these directions, many RROs felt "handcuffed"¹⁰⁸ when making presentations. One RRO explained that "there were some people that had it in their head that 'change is bad.' They didn't know why they didn't want it to change, but they just didn't want it to change. That was the hardest one to walk away from and not challenge them. You couldn't do that..."¹⁰⁹ Thus, in the view of remaining impartial, RROs were unable to encourage their audiences to consider alternative points of view, which many felt should be the aim of education campaigns.¹¹⁰ Debates

and discussion could not occur while the RRO was present, making the presentations a method of disseminating static information, rather than encouraging critical thinking about electoral systems. One RRO concluded that the campaign was “so fair that it curtailed a lively discussion.”¹¹¹

Indeed, some RROs and their audiences wished they could have been provided with some sense of the advantages and disadvantages about the current and proposed systems. As one RRO explained, “If you don’t see the problem, you’re not interested in the solution.”¹¹² RROs felt they needed to encourage voters to not only know the mechanics of voting systems but also to form an opinion. Although the presentation did present criteria to consider, it did not assist voters in making the connections between the criteria and the two proposed voting systems.¹¹³ Perhaps Elections Ontario had anticipated that interest groups would fill up this space, as they were “in full expectation that, as in New Zealand and British Columbia, the proponents of each of the two choices in the question would complement the process with fulsome public discussion and debate about the perceived merits of each electoral system.”¹¹⁴ However, only ten groups registered to take part in referendum campaigning, spending a combined total of only \$495,942.86.¹¹⁵ Thus, RROs felt they had to compensate for this lack of public debate, but were prevented from encouraging or even being in the room when there was discussion of the merits and demerits of the proposed electoral system. Likewise, the two major political parties and numerous candidates did not enter into the public debate on electoral reform during the 2007 provincial election. Although the Select Committee on Electoral Reform report stated that “Members from either side of the House should not be constrained by their party leadership from taking part in any public debate and discussion of electoral reform, and should be encouraged to

play a role in fostering public dialogue in their own ridings,”¹¹⁶ few candidates came out openly in support of or against the reform proposals.¹¹⁷

RROs hoped they could provide information to enough voters that their campaign may fill a part of this void. Unfortunately though, many RROs found that the audience reached was not as diverse as they had anticipated. They were instructed to give presentations at meetings of number of different community associations¹¹⁸ and the most common audiences were service groups, who, many RROs noted, were already aware of and interested in the referendum.¹¹⁹ The other group that was commonly presented to were seniors who attended presentations at their residences. Thus, some RROs admitted that they most often reached “overwhelmingly middle-aged and senior”¹²⁰ or those who already “paid attention to political matters.”¹²¹ Because their presentations were to specific interest or service groups, and very rarely open to the public, some RROs found it difficult to speak to the “general public,”¹²² or “people who worked for a living.”¹²³ RROs felt limited as to the population they could reach with their presentations, as they could not often get in front of other larger groups.¹²⁴ The final Elections Ontario Report records that 338,298 people reached through the efforts of RROs, which most likely includes both presentations and media reports in which RROs were cited.¹²⁵ This amount to less than 3% of the population.

It is necessary to reconsider whether the level of impartiality of Elections Ontario was taken too far. As explained earlier, voters do not necessarily require encyclopaedic information to make their decisions, but should be provided with the necessary information in order become “competent” voters or make appropriate shortcuts.¹²⁶ Voters gain these short-cuts best when a campaign is competitive, when there are elites on sides of the battle who can persuade them or, in the case of a referendum, when they can be prompted to consider two sides of the referendum

questions.¹²⁷ Therefore, an effective referendum information campaign needs to include more than simply the neutral information Elections Ontario provided.¹²⁸

There are a variety of ways to do this. In 2009, British Columbia opted to fund Yes and No campaigns in order to supplement their education programs with groups that could debate the advantages and drawback of each system.¹²⁹ Another solution could be to equip RROs with information to share with their audiences about potential ‘pros’ and ‘cons’ of the proposed electoral system. While not engaging in debate themselves, RROs could also be trained to moderate debates amongst their audiences regarding the proposals, rather than be required to exit before any debate occurs. In this way, RROs could be prepared to maintain neutrality whilst also encouraging the public to become competent voters, rather than to simply gain information about the technicalities of electoral systems. This would be parallel to the reflections presented in Election Ontario’s final report on the referendum: “Looking ahead, a broader role as a facilitator of debates could offer electors opportunities to satisfy their inquisitiveness to explore the details of the systems under consideration, in locally organized, balanced discussion forums, while preserving Elections Ontario’s neutrality.”¹³⁰

Recommendations and Conclusion

The experiences of RROs can provide some important lessons that EMBs can build upon when designing referendum education campaigns in the future. Although RROs reached a specific constituency, consisting primarily of those who sought out referendum education or were already politically motivated, most RROs agreed that having local representatives to direct voters to further information was nevertheless an important part of the education campaign. Even if the budget for RROs were doubled, the cost of having RROs remains comparatively small, and

therefore worth the cost associated with the program.¹³¹ Of the total \$7 895 000 spent on the referendum, the RRO program only cost \$580 000 or roughly 7% of the total budget.

There remain some key recommendations for future referendum education campaigns:

1. The referendum should not be held concurrent with a general election in order to encourage debate among politicians and the public.
 - a. If this is not possible, an independent referendum educational body could alleviate the traditional election administrator from the public education component of the referendum.
2. The education campaign must begin at least six months prior to the referendum date.
3. To encourage voters to form opinions on the referendum question, EMBs should also fund proponent and opponent groups to launch province-wide campaigns and debates.
4. Local liaison officers, such as RROs, are a key to bringing discussion about the referendum to the local level. As such, RROs must be provided, in a timely manner, with dynamic materials that encourage consideration of how electoral systems will both positively and negatively affect the province and individuals.
 - a. Materials must be available in a variety of languages and literacy levels.
5. RROs should be trained to encourage and moderate debate among participants while remaining neutral.
6. RROs must be supported by appropriate budgets, including more billable hours and funds for advertising, technology rentals and hall bookings.

Conclusion

Elections Ontario's unique Referendum Resource Officer program, while comprising only a small part of their total Provincial Referendum Education Program (PREP) budget, provided a local neutral voice for the issue of electoral reform in communities across Ontario. Faced with short lead-time, limited materials and budgets and scripted presentations, RROs sought to provide the necessarily information for electors to "understand the question"¹³² they would be presented with on October 10th referendum on electoral reform. However, Elections Ontario's mandate to provide neutral information was quickly found to be a barrier towards providing citizens with real competence to make a choice on referendum day. Without vocal activist groups, concerned political parties or any other cues towards the advantages and

disadvantages of the referendum, RROs attempted to fill the information void, but were limited as to the discussion they could foster because of their promise of impartiality.

This case study also echoes the disapproval of electoral reform referendum education campaigns across Canada by academics and commentators. RROs, like other scholars of referendum campaigns, criticised insufficient timelines, budgets, materials and public debate. The past two decades of electoral reform referendums has made it apparent that referendums will not engage public discussion about electoral system change or succeed without a genuinely interested public that is eager to debate the merits and demerits of a new electoral system. While this public discussion will ideally come from genuinely interested groups and citizen campaigns, the experiences of Canadian provinces demonstrate that this will not always be the case. The responsibility, then, of public education will fall to independent EMBs. Academic study of how the citizens become competent voters, along with the feedback of RROs who were at the frontlines of Ontario's referendum on electoral reform, demonstrates that public education must move beyond notifying the public that they have a "big decision"¹³³ to make or that a referendum will be taking place, but instead encourage genuine debate and discussion.

Notes

¹ Elections Ontario, *Referendum Statistical Results*, 2007, <http://www.elections.on.ca/NR/rdonlyres/61A53BBE-4F27-41F7-AF0E-5D3D6F8D153D/0/ReferendumStatisticalResults.pdf>

² Karen Howlett, "More Voters Understand Proposed Electoral Changes, but Fewer Support Them," *Globe and Mail*, October 9, 2007, A10.

³ Elections Ontario, *Provincial Referendum on Electoral System Reform: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer*, June 9, 2008, 34.

⁴ "The survey was conducted by the Institute for Social Research at York University from Sept. 10 to Oct. 9. (2007)" (Fred Cutler and Patrick Fournier, "Why Ontarians Said No to MMP," *Globe and Mail*, October 25, 2007, A21).

⁵ *An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act and to make related amendments to other Acts*, Bill 218 (Chapter 15, Statutes of Ontario, 2007), 2nd Session, 38th Legislature, Ontario.

⁶ Ontario was the only province to employ referendum resource officers for its referendum education campaign. For a good summary of education campaigns during electoral reform referendums, see Robert Hazell and Mark Chalmers, *Written Evidence Submitted to the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill - Political and Constitutional Reform Committee*, October 20, 2010, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmpolcon/437/437we07.htm#note28>.

⁷ One of the themes of the referendum education campaign was "It's your big decision." (Elections Ontario, *Provincial Referendum on Electoral System Reform: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer*, 12).

⁸ Lawrence LeDuc, *Politics of Direct Democracy: Referendums in Global Perspective* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2003), 43, 174. The 2007 Ontario Referendum on Electoral Reform is a good example of a referendum not clearly dividing voters along party lines. The governing Liberal Party had prominent candidates who spoke out in favour and against the referendum proposal.

⁹ Samuel L. Popkin, *The Reasoning Voter* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

¹⁰ Arthur Lupia and Richard Johnston, "Are Voters to Blame? Voter Competence and Elite Manoeuvres in Referendums" in *Referendum Democracy: Citizens, Elites, and Deliberation in Referendum Campaigns*, ed. Matthew Mendelsohn and Andrew Parkin (New York: Palgrave Publishers Ltd, 2001), 195.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 196.

¹² Lupia and Johnston 207-8; Claes H. de Vreese and Holli A. Semetko, *Political Campaigning in Referendums: Framing the Referendum Issue* (New York: Routledge Press, 2004), 7

¹³ LeDuc, *Politics of Direct Democracy*, 31, 43.

¹⁴ Lawrence LeDuc, "Electoral Reform and Direct Democracy in Canada: When Citizens Become Involved," *West European Politics* 24 (3) (2011), 552.

¹⁵ LeDuc, "Electoral Reform and Direct Democracy in Canada: When Citizens Become Involved," 552.

¹⁶ Laura Stephenson and Brian Tanguay, "Ontario's Referendum on Proportional Representation: Why Citizens Said No," *IRPP Choices* 15 (10), 2009, 19.

¹⁷ *Ibid*.

¹⁸ Office of the Premier, "McGuinty Government Creates Two New Ministries, Secretariat," October 23, 2003, <http://www.premier.gov.on.ca/news/event.php?ItemID=3783&Lang=En>.

¹⁹ Caroline Di Cocco, "Select Committee on Electoral Reform Transcript, 27 July 2005," *Ontario Legislature*, 2005.

²⁰ *One Ballot, Two Votes*, Recommendations of the Ontario Citizen's Assembly on Electoral Reform, 2007, 1.

²¹ *Electoral System Referendum Act 2007*, Bill 155 (Chapter 1, Statutes of Ontario 2007), 2nd Session, 38th Legislature, Ontario.

²² *An Act to amend the Election Act and the Election Finances Act and to make related amendments to other Acts*, Bill 218

²³ Elections Ontario, *Provincial Referendum on Electoral System Reform: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer*, 12

²⁴ *Ibid*, 32, 39.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 16

²⁶ Of the total \$7 895 000 final budget for the Referendum Education Project, \$3 741 000 was spent on traditional advertising (radio, TV and Print) (Elections Ontario, *Provincial Referendum on Electoral System Reform: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer*, 32).

²⁷ Elections Ontario, *Provincial Referendum on Electoral System Reform: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer*, 32.

²⁸ Hazell and Chalmers.

²⁹ Elections Ontario, *Provincial Referendum on Electoral System Reform: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer*, 22, 24.

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- ³⁰ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 6, email interview by author, June 12, 2011.
- ³¹ Elections Ontario, *Provincial Referendum on Electoral System Reform: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer*, 22.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Ibid, 24.
- ³⁴ Ibid, 22.
- ³⁵ Beramendi, Virginia et al., *Direct Democracy* (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and electoral Assistance, 2008), 200.
- ³⁶ Ibid, 6.
- ³⁷ Abdul Hai Patel, telephone interview with author, June 17, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 10, telephone interview with author, June 17, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 11, telephone interview with author, June 22, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 13, telephone interview with author, June 26, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 2, email interview with author, June 24, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 3, email interview with author, June 24, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 4, email interview with author, June 9, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 5, email interview with author, June 17, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 7, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 9, telephone interview with author, June 15, 2011; David Moore, telephone interview by author, June 15, 2011; David Patterson, email interview with author, June 9, 2011; George McIntyre, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011; Jan Purvis, telephone interview with author, June 15, 2011; Karen Sanchuck, email interview by author, June 23, 2011; Keith Hudson, telephone interview with author, June 24, 2011; Kevin Holloway, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011; Marty Fairbairn, telephone interview with author, June 27, 2011; Richard Metcalfe, telephone interview with author, June 20, 2011; Robert Fraser, telephone interview by author, June 15, 2011; Rosemary Ganley, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011; Sean Mulligan, telephone interview with author, June 16, 2011.
- ³⁸ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 11, telephone interview with author, June 22, 2011.
- ³⁹ Sean Mulligan, telephone interview with author, June 16, 2011.
- ⁴⁰ Karen Sanchuck, email interview by author, June 23, 2011.
- ⁴¹ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 10, telephone interview with author, June 17, 2011; Jan Purvis, telephone interview with author, June 15, 2011; Rosemary Ganley, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011.
- ⁴² Full list of approved presentation locations: “Community Service Clubs and Groups, Schools/School Boards, Community Centres, Recreation/Sports Teams, Tourism Boards, Nursing Homes, Seniors Residences, Municipal Councils and City Hall, Fitness Centres (drop off info), Day Care Centres (drop off info), Libraries, Churches – Places of Worship, Community Festivals and Fairs, Neighbourhood Associations and RatePayers Associations. DO NOT agree to present at MPPs or candidate’s town hall meetings.” (Lori Sutinen, August 28, 2007, email message to all RROs)
- ⁴³ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 13, telephone interview with author, June 26, 2011.
- ⁴⁴ John Hollins, “Select Committee on Electoral Reform Transcript, 31 Aug 2005,” *Ontario Legislature*, 2005.
- ⁴⁵ Elections Ontario, *Provincial Referendum on Electoral System Reform: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer*, 5.
- ⁴⁶ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 10, telephone interview with author, June 17, 2011.
- ⁴⁷ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 5, email interview with author, June 17, 2011.
- ⁴⁸ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 10, telephone interview with author, June 17, 2011.
- ⁴⁹ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 3, email interview with author, June 24, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 4, email interview with author, June 9, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 8, telephone interview with author, June 17, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 9, telephone interview with author, June 17, 2011; Karen Sanchuck, email interview by author, June 23, 2011.
- ⁵⁰ Karen Sanchuck, email interview by author, June 23, 2011; Anonymous Referendum Resource Officer 5, email interview with author, June 17, 2011.
- ⁵¹ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 4, email interview with author, June 9, 2011.
- ⁵² Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 2, email interview by author, June 24, 2011.
- ⁵³ Lori Sutinen, August 28, 2007, email message to all RROs.
- ⁵⁴ For example, Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 10, telephone interview with author, June 17, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 13, telephone interview with author, June 26, 2011;
- ⁵⁵ Elections Ontario, *Provincial Referendum on Electoral System Reform: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer*, 23.
- ⁵⁶ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 5, email interview with author, June 17, 2011.

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- ⁵⁷ David Moore, telephone interview by author, June 15, 2011.
- ⁵⁸ *Referendum Act*, S.C. 1992, c. 30, Canada, Section 6.6.
- ⁵⁹ Electoral Referendum Panel, *The Guide to the Electoral Referendum*, 1992, <http://www.referendum.org.nz/sites/all/themes/referendum/resources/1992-Guide-for-Voters.pdf>
- ⁶⁰ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 3, email interview by author, June 24, 2011.
- ⁶¹ Elections Ontario, *Provincial Referendum on Electoral System Reform: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer*, 23
- ⁶² *Ibid*, 11
- ⁶³ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 7, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid*.
- ⁶⁵ Kevin Holloway, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011.
- ⁶⁶ Lori Sutinen, September 11, 2007, email message to all RROs.
- ⁶⁷ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 11, telephone interview with author, June 22, 2011.
- ⁶⁸ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 2, email interview with author, June 24, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 5, email interview with author, June 17, 2011.
- ⁶⁹ Two brochures were distributed as householders (one near the beginning of the campaign and one at the end of the campaign) and one was given to RROs to hand out. One RRO noted that all three looked remarkably similar. (Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 5, email interview with author, June 17, 2011).
- ⁷⁰ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 3, email interview with author, June 24, 2011.
- ⁷¹ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 2, email interview with author, June 24, 2011.
- ⁷² Elections Ontario, *Provincial Referendum on Electoral System Reform: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer*, 12
- ⁷³ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 3, email interview with author, June 24, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 10, telephone interview with author, June 17, 2011; Kevin Holloway, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011; Rosemary Ganley, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011.
- ⁷⁴ Rosemary Ganley, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011.
- ⁷⁵ Kevin Holloway, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011.
- ⁷⁶ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 10, telephone interview with author, June 17, 2011.
- ⁷⁷ RROs noted that many of the additional resources were only available online.
- ⁷⁸ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 1, email interview with author, June 14, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 11, telephone interview with author, June 22, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 13, telephone interview with author, June 26, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 2, email interview with author, June 24, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 4, email interview with author, June 9, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 5, email interview with author, June 17, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 7, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011; Kevin Holloway, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011; Richard Metcalfe, telephone interview with author, June 20, 2011; Robert Fraser, telephone interview by author, June 15, 2011; William Wood, telephone interview with author, June 17, 2011.
- ⁷⁹ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 4, email interview with author, June 9, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 5, email interview with author, June 17, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 11, telephone interview with author, June 22, 2011.
- ⁸⁰ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 1, email interview with author, June 14, 2011.
- ⁸¹ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 5, email interview with author, June 17, 2011
- ⁸² Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 4, email interview with author, June 9, 2011
- ⁸³ RROs explained that they were not provided with a set number of hours. Instead, they were instructed simply to submit any hours they worked. Some RROs found that they received backlash for working too many hours. For example, Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 4, email interview with author, June 9, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 7, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 10, telephone interview with author, June 17, 2011.
- ⁸⁴ Elections Ontario, *Provincial Referendum on Electoral System Reform: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer*, 31.
- ⁸⁵ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 10, telephone interview with author, June 17, 2011.
- ⁸⁶ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 7, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 6, telephone interview with author, June 12, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 14, telephone interview with author, June 28, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 8, telephone interview with author, June 15, 2011; Kevin Holloway, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011; George McIntyre, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011.

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- ⁸⁷ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 4, email interview with author, June 9, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 14, telephone interview with author, June 28, 2011; Kevin Holloway, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011.
- ⁸⁸ Elections Ontario, *Provincial Referendum on Electoral System Reform: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer*, 25.
- ⁸⁹ Some RROs permitted me to read their final reports. In these reports, their total numbers of individuals reached included estimated readers of news stories they were featured in.
- ⁹⁰ Statistics Canada puts the Ontario population at 12 160 000 in 2006 (Statistics Canada, *Visual census: 2006 Census*. Ottawa, released December 7, 2010, http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2006/dp-pd/fs-fi/index.cfm?Lang=ENG&TOPIC_ID=3&PRCODE=35)
- ⁹¹ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 8, telephone interview with author, June 15, 2011.
- ⁹² Elections Ontario, *Introductory - Training for RRO*, (PowerPoint slides).
- ⁹³ Elections Ontario, *Provincial Referendum on Electoral System Reform: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer*, 22.
- ⁹⁴ Jan Purvis, telephone interview with author, June 15, 2011.
- ⁹⁵ Ibid.
- ⁹⁶ Elections Ontario, *Provincial Referendum on Electoral System Reform: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer*, 24.
- ⁹⁷ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer, telephone interview with author 10, June 17, 2011.
- ⁹⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁰ David Moore, telephone interview by author, June 15, 2011.
- ¹⁰¹ Kevin Holloway, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011.
- ¹⁰² For example, Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 10, telephone interview with author, June 17, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 12, telephone interview with author, June 22, 2011; Elections Ontario, *Provincial Referendum on Electoral System Reform: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer*, 24.
- ¹⁰³ Lori Sutinen, September 11, 2007, email message to all RROs.
- ¹⁰⁴ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 10, telephone interview with author, June 17, 2011
- ¹⁰⁵ Kevin Holloway, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011; Richard Metcalfe, telephone interview with author, June 20, 2011.
- ¹⁰⁶ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 11, telephone interview with author, June 22, 2011.
- ¹⁰⁷ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 7, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011.
- ¹⁰⁸ Rosemary Ganley, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011.
- ¹⁰⁹ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 8, telephone interview with author, June 15, 2011.
- ¹¹⁰ For example, one RRO mentioned, “the goal of education is to replace an empty mind with an open mind.” (Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 7, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011).
- ¹¹¹ Rosemary Ganley, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011.
- ¹¹² Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 10, telephone interview by author, June 17, 2011.
- ¹¹³ Elections Ontario, *Powerpoint - Original – for RRO* (PowerPoint presentation provided to RROs).
- ¹¹⁴ Elections Ontario, *Provincial Referendum on Electoral System Reform: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer*, 7.
- ¹¹⁵ Elections Ontario, “Registered Referendum Campaign Organizers in Ontario,” 2007, <http://www.elections.on.ca/en-CA/CandidatesAndParties/ReferendumAdvertisingActivities/RegisteredReferendumCampaignOrganizersinOntario.htm>
- ¹¹⁶ Ontario Legislature Select Committee on Electoral Reform, *Report on Electoral Reform*, November 2005, 2nd Session, 38th Parliament, Ontario.
- ¹¹⁷ Lawrence LeDuc discusses the lack of party involvement in the campaign in his article, “The failure of Electoral Reform Proposals in Canada,” *Political Science* 61 (21) (2009).
- ¹¹⁸ Lori Sutinen, August 28, 2007, email message to all RROs.
- ¹¹⁹ Adam Navickas, telephone interview by author, June 13, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 8, email interview by author, June 15, 2011.
- ¹²⁰ Karen Sanchuck, email interview by author, June 23, 2011.
- ¹²¹ Robert Fraser, telephone interview by author, June 15, 2011.
- ¹²² David Moore, telephone interview by author, June 15, 2011.
- ¹²³ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 3, email interview by author, June 24, 2011.
- ¹²⁴ Sean Mulligan, telephone interview with author, June 16, 2011.
- ¹²⁵ Again, in the RRO final reports I was able to read, the total numbers of individuals reached included estimated readers of news stories they were featured in.

¹²⁶ Lupia and Johnston, 195.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 208.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Elections British Columbia, *Report of the Chief Electoral Officer (39th Provincial General Election and Referendum on Electoral Reform)*, May 12, 2009, 39.

¹³⁰ Elections Ontario, *Provincial Referendum on Electoral System Reform: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer*, 33.

¹³¹ Elections Ontario, *Provincial Referendum on Electoral System Reform: Report of the Chief Electoral Officer*, 7.

¹³² Ibid, 12.

¹³³ Ibid.

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Appendix 1: List of Interviews with Referendum Resource Officers

(Ridings noted in brackets)

Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 1. Email interview with author. June 14, 2011.

Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 2. Email interview with author. June 24, 2011.

Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 3. Email interview with author. June 24, 2011.

Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 4. Email interview with author. June 9, 2011.

Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 5. Email interview with author. June 17, 2011.

Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 6. Telephone interview with author. June 12, 2011.

Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 7. Telephone interview with author. June 13, 2011.

Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 8. Telephone interview with author. June 15, 2011.

Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 9. Telephone interview with author. June 15, 2011.

Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 10. Telephone interview with author. June 17, 2011.

Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 11. Telephone interview with author. June 22, 2011.

Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 12. Telephone interview with author. June 22, 2011.

Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 13. Telephone interview with author. June 26, 2011.

Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 14. Telephone interview with author. June 28, 2011.

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- Hudson, Keith. Telephone interview with author. June 24, 2011. (Oxford)
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- Metcalfe, Richard. Telephone interview with author. June 20, 2011. (Sault Ste. Marie)
- Moore, David. Telephone interview with author. June 15, 2011. (Parry Sound – Muskoka)
- Mulligan, Sean. Telephone interview with author. June 16, 2011. (Markham – Unionville)
- Navickas, Adam. Email interview with author. June 13, 2011. (Beaches - East York)
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- Wood, William. Telephone interview with author. June 17, 2011. (Stormont - Dundas - South Glengarry)