

Lessons Learned: Referendum Resource Officers and the 2007 Ontario Referendum on Electoral Reform¹

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Abstract: During the 2007 Ontario referendum on electoral reform, Elections Ontario took the unprecedented step of hiring local referendum resource officers (RRO) to provide referendum information through presentations and public meetings in all ridings. This article examines the feedback of nearly one-third of these RROs collected through telephone and email interviews. It seeks to understand the challenges faced by RROs and present a number of lessons learned from their experiences. Many of the RROs interviewed 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 to keep the Elections Ontario campaign neutral, ultimately limiting of the ability of their audiences to form opinions on the referendum issue. 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 form opinions.

Keywords: electoral reform, referendum, Ontario

Résumé: Lors du référendum ontarien de 2007 sur la réforme électorale, Élections Ontario prit la décision sans précédent d'engager des agents locaux d'information sur le référendum, ou *Referendum Resource Officers* (RRO) chargés d'informer le public sur cette consultation par le biais de présentations et d'assemblées dans chaque circonscription. Cet article étudie les réactions de près d'un tiers de ces agents, colligées lors d'entrevues téléphoniques ou par courriel. Il vise à comprendre les défis auxquels firent face les *RRO* et présente nombre de leçons tirées de leur expérience. Plusieurs des *RRO* interviewés estiment que leur travail n'a pas été soutenu par des échéanciers, un budget et un matériel appropriés. De plus, plusieurs sont mécontents des restrictions qui leur furent imposées dans le but de garantir la neutralité de la campagne, qui limitèrent la capacité des publics rencontrés à se former une opinion sur l'enjeu du référendum. Cette étude de cas conforte les résultats d'études antérieures sur la formation et le vote lors de référendums, qui démontrent que les campagnes d'éducation référendaires doivent non seulement livrer une information pertinente et aisément accessible, mais aussi encourager le débat dans le but de donner aux citoyens la compétence requise à former une opinion.

Mots-clés: réforme électorale, référendum, Ontario

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On October 10th, 2007, Ontarians were provided the unique opportunity to vote on a proposed change to their electoral system in a province-wide referendum. If passed, the province's current system of First-Past-the-Post (FPTP) would be replaced with a new Mixed-Member Proportional (MMP) system, as proposed by a provincial Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform (2007). However, 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 (Elections Ontario, 2007d: ii). Although in some surveys a large majority of electors self-reported that they knew about the proposed changes, many commentators and academics blamed the failure of MMP on the quality of the education campaign.¹ Two weeks after the referendum, political scientists Cutler and Fournier wrote in the *Globe and Mail* that although citizens said they knew about the referendum, "useful knowledge about the proposal was rare" (2007).

The responsibility of providing referendum information to the public fell to Ontario's non-partisan election management body. Elections Ontario was instructed by the government to "ensure that electors throughout Ontario receive clear and impartial information... about the referendum" (Ontario Legislature, 2007) and therefore launched a Provincial Referendum Education Program (PREP), comprised of advertisements, an information hotline, a website, and public outreach activities. This public outreach element also 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 was tasked with providing referendum information through

presentations and public meetings in their communities. It was the first time an elections administration agency 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. It seeks to understand the challenges faced by RROs and their perspectives of the referendum education campaign in the ridings. It furthermore seeks to present a number of lessons learned from these experiences. Many of the RROs interviewed felt that the referendum education program fell short of its aim to provide local education on the referendum question. 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 to 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" (Elections Ontario, 2008: 12).

Voter Competence in Referendums

The first academic analysis to follow Ontario's referendum on electoral reform was the aforementioned *Globe and Mail* article. Using survey data collected during the referendum campaign, Culter and Fournier sought to uncover why the referendum did not pass (2007). One major

observation they make is that the public was not dissatisfied with the FPTP system to begin with, making the weak response to electoral reform unsurprising. Additionally, they found that the public was not well informed about the electoral reform proposal. Although two-thirds of the public knew a referendum on electoral reform was taking place, less than half knew important details about the proposed MMP system. Stephenson and Tanguay agree that concerns for the quality of provincial democracy was never a salient issue for voters and that voters were not sufficiently informed about the referendum (2009). Similar evidence led LeDuc, Bastedo and Baquero (2008) to call the 2007 referendum on electoral reform a “quiet referendum,” in which the public remained largely uninformed and unengaged throughout the province-wide electoral reform debate.

It is, in fact, a common problem during referendums that citizens lack the knowledge to make good decisions, especially since referendums can touch on unfamiliar issues and may not clearly divide the populace along party lines (LeDuc, 2003: 43, 174).² Therefore, electors must rely even more on the information gleaned from the referendum campaign when making their decisions. However, it is also common that many voters, for lack of time, interest or political sophistication, will not be able to condense a great amount of information into a logical vote choice. This is particularly difficult for a referendum on something as technical as electoral reform. 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 (1991). Instead, voters will look for cues or shortcuts in order to make their decision at the polls. These cues can be as simple as consideration of their party identification, or how the vote will affect their social group or

likelihood. However, during referendum campaigns, those 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 perceptions of candidates’ characteristics, during referendums where there may not be a clear spokesperson for 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. Indeed, voters may not have even considered electoral systems change before the referendum.

Therefore, the education campaigns by election management bodies or government-appointed panels become so crucial for referendums regarding electoral reform. Public education campaigns need to focus on providing the voter with “competence” rather than just the 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” (2001: 195). 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 (Lupia and Johnston, 2001: 196). Referendums can provide a unique opportunity for citizens to engage in policy decisions, but only if citizens are equipped with the competence to make good decisions (Lupia and Johnston, 2001: 207-8; de Vreese and Semetko, 2004: 7).

Moreover, the quality of an education campaign during a referendum can have an impact on the outcome of the vote. As Johnston et al. explain regarding

Canada's 1992 constitutional referendum, well-informed voters were more likely to support the Charlottetown Accord. Even those who were pre-disposed against the Accord were more likely to become supporters as they learned more about it (Johnston et al., 1996: 249). There exists a danger that an "information barrier," or lack of public awareness, can skew the results towards the status quo (LeDuc, 2011: 552). LeDuc explains that "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" (2011: 552). This idea that the NO side will have an advantage when the public is poorly informed is supported by a study conducted by Stephenson and Tanguay on the 2007 Ontario Referendum on Electoral Reform (2009: 19). Their survey found that those who knew more about the referendum proposal were more likely to vote for reform.³ Again, they demonstrate that an "information deficit" can skew results in favour of the status quo. Therefore, a better understanding of various referendum public information strategies, as well as the challenges that election administrators face, can also help us understand the results of referendums.

Examples of Referendum Education Campaigns

Public education campaigns are therefore key to understanding the referendum on MMP in Ontario. Ontario had the experiences of many prior referendum education campaigns to draw on when designing their education campaign. New Zealand's successful 1993 referendum on a mixed-member proportional system featured a five million dollar campaign, run by an

independent Chief Ombudsman. It included brochures sent to every household (as well as a more detailed guide available to all voters), seminars and three television programs about the referendum (Seyd, 1998). In addition, the campaign allocated resources to reach Maori voters (Vowles, 1995: 109). Nevertheless, it was criticized for only raising awareness that the referendum would take place and for providing vague information on key issues for the population, such as how the party lists would be decided and how coalition government might work (Temple, 1995: 235; Vowles, 1995: 109). In addition to this public information campaign, however, the referendum campaign featured lively discussions between political leaders and interest groups. The issue polarized New Zealand's political elites, pitting a National Party-backed Campaign for Better Government (against MMP) against a Labour party-backed Electoral Reform Coalition (for MMP) (Temple, 1995: 236). Without spending caps, the groups initiated a fierce debate on electoral system change, though the campaign against MMP spent about ten times that of the more grassroots campaign for electoral reform (Temple, 1995: 236). Nevertheless, the referendum passed by 53.9% and New Zealand adopted a system of MMP (Temple, 1995: 237).

Shortly thereafter, discussions began regarding a change to Canada's electoral system.⁴ British Columbia was the first province to initiate a provincial referendum on electoral reform in 2005, after an innovative Citizens' Assembly proposed a new system of single transferable vote (BC-STV).⁵ Like New Zealand's campaign, Elections BC's education program included a media advertising campaign, an information hotline, a website and a brochure mailed to each household (Elections BC, 2005). Furthermore, four province-wide liaison officers were hired to

target Aboriginal populations, Indo-Canadians, Chinese-Canadians and youth. The campaign focused on raising awareness that a referendum would take place, and was criticized for failing to generate public enthusiasm for the question of electoral reform. While interest groups opposed to and advocating for BC-STV did attempt to spark debate among some voters, the campaigns failed to gain much attention from the general public or the media (Pilon, 2010: 78). The final vote was extremely close to passing (57.69% for BC -STV, 42.31% against), but did not meet the 60% threshold that had been required by the government for the referendum to pass (Barnes and Robertson, 2009). With such a close result, a second referendum was held in 2009. This time, the education campaign included \$500 000 funding for coalitions of interest groups on both the 'yes' (British Columbians for BC-STV) and 'no' (No STV) sides of the debate. However, the public was less interested in electoral system change than they had been only 5 years earlier, with only 39.09% of electors in favour of the proposal (Elections BC, 2009b).

The first province to bring forward a mixed-member proportional system to the Canadian citizenry through a referendum was Prince Edward Island in November of 2005 (Carruthers and Gallant). The education campaign was headed by the Commission on PEI's Electoral Future, consisting of eight commissioners from PEI who were instructed by the provincial government to analyse electoral reform commissioner Normal H. Carruthers' MMP recommendation and launch a public education program in advance of the referendum (Russell and Weeks, 2005: 3). This was to be done in only 8 months, and the commissioners initially requested more time to fully prepare their MMP proposal and better educate the public (Lea, 2006).

The government nevertheless kept the referendum date set at November 28, 2005. The public education campaign consisted of public meetings, media ads, a brochure mailed to each household and a plebiscite website. With weak interest groups, the editorial section of the daily provincial newspaper became the most common forum for discussion about the plebiscite.⁶ The referendum received very little support, with 64% voting against MMP (Elections PEI, 2005).

When Ontario's referendum on electoral reform was announced, the Chief Electoral Officer was instructed to "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" (Ontario Legislature, 2007a). In consultation with their counterparts in British Columbia and New Zealand, 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" (Election Ontario, 2008: 12). 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 (Elections Ontario, 2008: 32, 39). The PREP program included a series of three information pieces 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 (Elections Ontario, 2008: 15-7). Additionally, there included advertising on television, radio and print, which consumed nearly half the total budget of referendum expenditures (Elections Ontario, 2008: 13-6)⁷ and an internet strategy, that included a website, interactive video and internet advertising (Elections Ontario, 2008, 18-20).

Elections Ontario also 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” (Elections Ontario, 2008: 22, 24). One RRO was hired in each electoral district.⁸ 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” (Elections Ontario, 2008: 22). 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; [and] Maintain a neutral position in all of their communications” (2008: 22). 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” (2008: 24).

Methodology

In order to better understand the RRO program and approaches to voter education in referendums, I conducted interviews with 30 RROs in June, 2011. Elections Ontario offered to facilitate contact with RROs, however this proved not to be necessary, as many of the RROs names and contact information were available online from their activities as RROs. Additionally, some RROs were able to put me in touch with their colleagues. Attempts were made to contact all 106 RROs. However, when a goal of interviews with 30 RROs was reached, additional RROs were not contacted due to time constraints. The RROs interviewed were diverse, from both urban and rural communities, Northern and Southern Ontario, and from a variety of professions and ages. Many of the RROs interviewed were retired from professions such as teaching, business and publishing. Some were recent university graduates, 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 (Elections Ontario, 2008: 22).⁹ A full list of RROs interviewed, including the name and riding of RROs who chose not to remain anonymous, is available in Appendix 1.

Interviews were conducted by email and telephone. Email interviews were structured. Each RRO was provided a list of questions covering RROs’ experiences from their initial inquiry into the position to their post-election reflections, to which they responded in writing. Telephone interviews

were semi-structured, lasted between ten minutes and one hour, and were conducted by the author. The same list of questions used for email interviews were followed as a guideline, but the interviewer asked some follow-up questions to responses and allowed RROs to provide additional opinions and information. Some RROs voluntarily sent follow-up emails with copies of materials they used and reports they produced. Ethics approval was granted to allow the researcher digital recording of the telephone interviews for the purpose of the research project, to be destroyed after a period of 5 years. The feedback of RROs was the focus, rather than testing a specific hypothesis. Interview data was coded by hand to identify certain themes in the interviews, but was not processed quantitatively. While interviewing RROs, it became clear that several important challenges were commonly faced by RROs of different backgrounds and regions. Their input echoes some of the problems that arose with both the localized and province-wide referendum education campaign.

Campaign Timeframe

Before the referendum was even a certainty, Elections Ontario knew they would be constrained by a short timeframe to 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” (Elections Ontario, 2008: 6).

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 interviewed expressed frustration that the short timeline limited their ability to perform their education duties.¹⁰ 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.”¹¹ Another explained 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.”¹² Thus, even if voters were able to learn about the technical aspects of the referendum during the campaign, they had little time to form opinions on the subject. For some RROs, this proved to be a “major bone of contention with many people in the audiences.”¹³ 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.¹⁴

More specifically, many RROs mentioned that lead-time restrictions limited the possible presentation venues. Charged with making presentations about the referendum at places such as community group meetings, seniors’ residences, places of worship and community festivals,¹⁵ 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...."¹⁶ Thus, the short lead-time was not consistent with the stated aims of the RRO program to visit a large number of community groups.

Governments and election administrators therefore need the foresight to begin the education campaign months before the referendum date, both through the promotion of media awareness and by allowing local representatives to begin speaking about the referendum to their communities much earlier. Elections Ontario emphasized in their final report that they were simply given too little time. Considering their education mandate was announced less than six months prior to the referendum date, the burden of timing was not the responsibility of Elections Ontario. Instead, as one RRO explains, "Education should have started much before it did. I viewed this as a lack of political will to actually see democracy work fairly."¹⁷ Knowing from RRO feedback that education campaigns must begin many months in advance of the referendum date, governments serious about giving electoral reform a fair hearing should start the electoral reform process well in advance of a proposed referendum date.

Timing with a Provincial Election

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 while 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?" noting that the emphasis would most likely be placed on the provincial election campaigns, rather than the referendum (Ontario Legislature, 2005b). 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 (2008: 5).

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 likewise faced serious challenges because of the 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 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.¹⁸ Another explained that halfway through the campaign her desk was taken up as storage space.¹⁹ However, the vast majority of RROs 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.²⁰

Five other RROs mentioned similar responses when they first met their local Returning Officer.²¹

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.²² 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!"²³

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

With the referendum and the election being held at the same time... the referendum was overshadowed by the election, because that's what people were interested in. If it had been separate, it would have cost more money of course, but it would have had more profile and... people would focus in on it and make themselves more aware of it.²⁴

Another RRO noted that

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.²⁵

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

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. RROs were initially prohibited from presenting at "MPPs or candidate's town hall meetings," (Sutinen, 2007a) 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.²⁶ 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 (2008: 23). Nevertheless, one RRO explained that she felt "lost in the shuffle" at all-candidates' meetings.²⁷ Another lamented a missed opportunity to answer questions.²⁸

Based on this feedback, election management bodies should consider holding referendums apart from a general election. Indeed, Canada's federal *Referendum Act* stipulates that a referendum cannot be held concurrently with a general election (Parliament of Canada, 1992). 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.

Elections Ontario also faced the pressure of managing an election and referendum at the same time and, as such, limited time and resources were 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.²⁹ Delegating the public education campaign to an independent body separate from the regular elections administrator could alleviate stress on election management bodies when there is a concurrent general election. This was done in New Zealand where 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 (Electoral Referendum Panel, 1993).

Materials

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. This material was developed by the public relations firm Grey Worldwide, with the advice of academics and input of focus groups (Elections Ontario, 2008: 11, 23). 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. One RRO called this a problem of materials being “half-baked” before they were sent out to RROs.³⁰ 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 presentation.³¹ 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 (Sutinen, 2007b).

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.”³² Many RROs suggested the need for graphics and animation to make the difficult material more accessible and even exciting to watch.³³

Similarly, many RROs found their audiences confused by the brochures that were distributed both in their mailboxes and at the presentations.³⁴ One RRO explained that “Everyone - homeless to bankers to grade-school to PhD - complained about brochures.”³⁵ 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.³⁶

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 originally 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 (2008: 12).

Many RROs found this high level of literacy prevented them from using the tools effectively.³⁷ One RRO, a retired teacher, commented that the materials “pedagogically weren’t designed by educators.”³⁸ 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.³⁹ Another 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.⁴⁰

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. Based on the feedback of these RROs, high-quality materials should be created for audiences without internet accesses,⁴¹ for children and youth, and in varying reading levels. Educational tools with language more accessible for those whose first language is not English or French was also suggested, whether in a broader range of languages, or at a more appropriate literacy level.

Budgets

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. In particular, access to the technology necessary to use the materials provided was a common complaint among RROs.⁴² 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"⁴³ 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."⁴⁴ 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].⁴⁵

RROs also wished they had been given budgets to rent equipment, book halls and meeting rooms and advertise upcoming presentations. One RRO explains 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."⁴⁶ 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.

For some RROs, there was also a discrepancy between the billable hours allotted and the hours required to complete the job.⁴⁷ 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 (Elections Ontario, 2008: 31). One RRO explains that she met the greatest number people when she convinced local organizers to allow her to set up a booth at a

rural fair. This forum allowed her to speak to a diverse group of people and individually answer questions about the referendum for them. However, she was criticized by Elections Ontario for working too many hours. She explains:

I only took bathroom breaks and I worked all the hours I was there and I remember Elections Ontario didn't pay me for all my time. They couldn't believe I worked that many hours and spoke to that many people. I spoke to hundreds of people each day as I didn't sit down on a chair waiting for people to talk to me.⁴⁸

Another RRO recounts a similar situation: "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."⁴⁹ 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.⁵⁰

Working only part-time, the RROs were unable to reach the percentage of the population they desired. 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.⁵¹ 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."⁵²

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. 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 (Elections Ontario, 2007b). 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" (2008: 22). This proved to be a difficult rule to follow for many RROs who wished to adapt the presentation for their audiences. One RRO noted, "When you're singing from the songbook, you can't truly explain it."⁵³ 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 this. 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.⁵⁴ 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 (Elections Ontario, 2008: 24). 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.”⁵⁵ She also remembers some participants who specifically came to the presentation because they were unsatisfied with the explanation from the information hotline and were disappointed when the RRO had the exact same scripted answer to the question.⁵⁶ 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”⁵⁷ 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.”⁵⁸ Another recalls being told during training, “You’re paid to do; you’re not paid to think.”⁵⁹ 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?”⁶⁰ 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 (Sutinen, 2007b).

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.⁶¹ Northern RROs were often faced with the question of how it would affect their region.⁶² 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 was, “How can we vote and approve... something that you don’t know?”⁶³ 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.”⁶⁴ Answering questions from a script was therefore a challenging direction for some RROs to follow.

Because of these directions, many RROs felt “handcuffed”⁶⁵ 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...”⁶⁶ Thus, in attempting to remain impartial, RROs were unable to encourage their audiences to consider alternative points of view, which many felt should be the aim of education campaigns.⁶⁷ 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.”⁶⁸

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.”⁶⁹ 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 (Elections Ontario, 2007c). 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” (Elections Ontario, 2008: 7). However, only ten groups registered to take part in referendum campaigning, spending a combined total of only \$495 942.86 (Elections Ontario, 2007a). 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 chose not to enter into the public debate on electoral reform during the 2007 provincial election.

RROs hoped they could provide information to enough voters that their campaign could 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 a number of different community associations and the most common audiences were service groups, who, many RROs noted, were already aware of and interested in the referendum.⁷⁰ 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”⁷¹ members of the public or those who already “paid attention to political matters.”⁷² 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,”⁷³ or “people who worked for a living.”⁷⁴ The final Elections Ontario Report records that 338,298 people were reached through the efforts of RROs, which includes both presentations and the estimated audience of media reports in which RROs were cited.⁷⁵ This amounts to less than 3% of the population.

It is necessary to reconsider whether an effective referendum information campaign needs to include more than simply the neutral information Elections Ontario provided. 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, though it is nearly impossible to regulate the quality of independent campaigns (Elections BC, 2009a: 39). A similar, but more manageable, 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 encouraging the public to form opinions. This is 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” (2008: 33).

Lessons Learned

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.⁷⁶ RROs sought to provide the necessary information for electors to “understand the question” (Elections Ontario, 2008: 12) that they would be presented with in the on October 10th referendum. However, they faced a short lead-time, limited materials and budgets, and scripted presentations. Their on-the-ground experiences echo the survey research and media commentary that suggests Ontarians were not equipped with

the appropriate information to make a competent decision on the MMP proposal.

This echoes the academic literature that suggests that voters require information that will lead to decision-making shortcuts, rather than purely technical data (LeDuc, 2003: 174; Popkin, 1991). Without vocal activist groups, active political parties or any other cues on the advantages and disadvantages of the referendum, RROs attempted to fill an information void. But they were limited as to the discussion they could foster because of their promise of impartiality, causing frustration for both RROs and voters. They were often unable to help voters make the connections needed to form opinions.

This case study also supports the theory that referendums results will be skewed to the status quo when there is a barrier to voters’ access of useful information. Some RROs felt that, since they were prohibited from giving information for or against the referendum, their audiences could not properly consider voting for MMP. This suggests that public education needed to move beyond notifying the public that they have a “big decision” (Elections Ontario, 2008: 12) to make, but instead encouraging the genuine debate and discussion needed to make that decision.

Finally, the feedback of RROs broadly supports the criticism of the Ontario government’s conduct during the referendum campaign. LeDuc, for example, writes that “having created the Assembly, the Ontario government essentially abandoned and isolated it” (2011: 564). He explains that the decisions of the provincial government, whether on the issue of requiring a supermajority for the referendum to pass, or the referendum’s timeline, directed the referendum towards failure. This reiterates the common frustration of some RROs that the provincial government had doomed the referendum to failure. One

RRO mentioned that “it is clear to me that MMP was set up to fail. A promise had been made by the Liberal government and it had been fulfilled, but the process (especially the timing) that was used, assured the outcome the government desired.”⁷⁷ This sentiment supports the academic opinion that the failure of electoral reform in Ontario lies, at least partially, with a lack of political will in Ontario’s Liberal government.

In sum, the experiences of local RROs reflects the public and academic concern that the 2007 Ontario referendum on electoral reform was crippled by a government reluctant to give it a fair chance at success and a public that was not equipped with the competence to make such a big decision.

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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.
- Balaban, Anne. Telephone interview with author.
June 15, 2011. (Willowdale)
- Fairbain, Marty. Telephone interview with author.
June 27, 2011. (Guelph)
- Fraser, Robert. Telephone interview with author.
June 15, 2011. (Nipissing)
- Ganley, Rosemary. Telephone interview with author.
June 13, 2011. (Peterborough)
- Holloway, Kevin. Telephone interview with author.
June 13, 2011. (Thunder Bay - Superior North)
- Hudson, Keith. Telephone interview with author.
June 24, 2011. (Oxford)
- McIntyre, George. Telephone interview with author.
June 13, 2011. (London North Centre)
- Metcalf, 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)
- Patel, Abdul Hai. Telephone interview with author.
June 17, 2011. (Scarborough – Southwest)
- Patterson, David. Email interview with author. June 9, 2011. (Prince Edward – Hastings)
- Purvis, Jan. Telephone interview with author. June 15, 2011. (Kitchener – Waterloo)
- Sanchuk, Karen. Email interview with author. June 23, 2011. (Chatham - Kent – Essex)
- Wood, William. Telephone interview with author.
June 17, 2011. (Stormont - Dundas - South Glengarry)

¹ In the last week before the election, a Strategic Council poll reported that 76% of electors knew about the proposed changes (Howlett, 2007). The question asked whether respondents knew “a lot,” “a little” or “nothing at all” about the proposed new electoral system. 76% of respondents answered “a lot” or “a little.” Elections Ontario’s post-election survey reported that of the 83% of electors aware of the referendum, 76% felt they were very or somewhat

knowledgeable about the referendum question (Elections Ontario, 2008: 34). It is important to note that this poll, like the one done by the Strategic Council asked respondents for a self-assessment of how knowledgeable they were about the referendum.

² 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.

³ Their finding is echoed by Cutler and Fournier, 2007.

⁴ Louis Massicotte suggests that there have been three waves of calls electoral reform in Canada. For historical examples of electoral reform discussions in Canada, see Massicotte, 2008 or Pilon, 2007. See also the Law Commission of Canada's report *Voting Counts: Electoral Reform for Canada* (2004).

⁵ For more in the Citizen's Assembly process, particularly in British Columbia, see Warren and Pearce, 2008.

⁶ Lea.

⁷ 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).

⁸ 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.⁸ Consequently, the riding was covered by two neighbouring RROs (Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 6, email interview by author, June 12, 2011.)

⁹ When interviewed, RROs were asked to place themselves into one of three age groups (*18-29 30-49, and 50+*). Of those who volunteered their exact age, the youngest was 25 and the oldest was 70. However, only 6 of the RROs interviewed categorized themselves as younger than 50.

¹⁰ 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.

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

¹² Sean Mulligan, telephone interview with author, June 16, 2011.

¹³ Karen Sanchuck, email interview by author, June 23, 2011.

¹⁴ 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.

¹⁵ 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" (Sutinen, 2007a).

¹⁶ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 13, telephone interview with author, June 26, 2011.

¹⁷ Karen Sanchuck, email interview by author, June 23, 2011.

¹⁸ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 10, telephone interview with author, June 17, 2011.

¹⁹ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 5, email interview with author, June 17, 2011.

²⁰ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 10, telephone interview with author, June 17, 2011.

²¹ 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.

²² Karen Sanchuck, email interview by author, June
23, 2011; Anonymous Referendum Resource Officer
5, email interview with author, June 17, 2011.

²³ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer
4, email interview with author, June 9, 2011.

²⁴ Richard Metcalfe, telephone interview with author,
June 20, 2011.

²⁵ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer
2, email interview by author, June 24, 2011.

²⁶ 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;

²⁷ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer
5, email interview with author, June 17, 2011.

²⁸ David Moore, telephone interview by author, June
15, 2011.

²⁹ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer
3, email interview by author, June 24, 2011.

³⁰ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer
7, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011.

³¹ Kevin Holloway, telephone interview with author,
June 13, 2011.

³² Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer
11, telephone interview with author, June 22, 2011.

³³ 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.

³⁴ 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).

³⁵ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer
3, email interview with author, June 24, 2011,

³⁶ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer
2, email interview with author, June 24, 2011.

³⁷ 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.

³⁸ Rosemary Ganley, telephone interview with author,
June 13, 2011.

³⁹ Kevin Holloway, telephone interview with author,
June 13, 2011.

⁴⁰ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer
10, telephone interview with author, June 17, 2011.

⁴¹ RROs noted that many of the additional resources
were only available online.

⁴² 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.

⁴³ 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.

⁴⁴ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer
1, email interview with author, June 14, 2011.

⁴⁵ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer
5, email interview with author, June 17, 2011

⁴⁶ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer
4, email interview with author, June 9, 2011

⁴⁷ 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.

⁴⁸ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 4, email interview with author, June 9, 2011.

⁴⁹ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 10, telephone interview with author, June 17, 2011.

⁵⁰ 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.

⁵¹ 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.

⁵² Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 8, telephone interview with author, June 15, 2011.

⁵³ Jan Purvis, telephone interview with author, June 15, 2011.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer, telephone interview with author 10, June 17, 2011.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ David Moore, telephone interview by author, June 15, 2011.

⁵⁹ Kevin Holloway, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011.

⁶⁰ 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.

⁶¹ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 10, telephone interview with author, June 17, 2011

⁶² Kevin Holloway, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011; Richard Metcalfe, telephone interview with author, June 20, 2011.

⁶³ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 11, telephone interview with author, June 22, 2011.

⁶⁴ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 7, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011.

⁶⁵ Rosemary Ganley, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011.

⁶⁶ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 8, telephone interview with author, June 15, 2011.

⁶⁷ 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).

⁶⁸ Rosemary Ganley, telephone interview with author, June 13, 2011.

⁶⁹ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 10, telephone interview by author, June 17, 2011.

⁷⁰ Adam Navickas, telephone interview by author, June 13, 2011; Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 8, email interview by author, June 15, 2011.

⁷¹ Karen Sanchuck, email interview by author, June 23, 2011.

⁷² Robert Fraser, telephone interview by author, June 15, 2011.

⁷³ David Moore, telephone interview by author, June 15, 2011.

⁷⁴ Anonymous Former Referendum Resource Officer 3, email interview by author, June 24, 2011.

⁷⁵ In the RRO final reports I was permitted to read by some of the RROs, the total numbers of individuals reached included estimated readers of news stories they were featured in.

⁷⁶ Of the total \$7 895 000 spent on the referendum, the RRO program only cost \$580 000 or roughly 7% of the total budget (Elections Ontario, 2008: 7).

⁷⁷ Karen Sanchuck, email interview by author, June 23, 2011.