

# Policy Research and Innovation in Governance: A Legislative Perspective

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Legislative Assembly of Ontario

# Background

Ontario

Parliamentary system

Research and Information Services



# Ontario



# Ontario

- One million square kilometres
- Area larger than France and Spain combined
- Population – 12.8 million
- One in three Canadians lives in Ontario
- One of the most multicultural societies in the world – 29% foreign born



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Le Répertoire de l'Ontario au Québec, Ressources naturelles Canada.



# Government

- Westminster-style parliamentary system
- 107 Members (MPPs)
- First past the post electoral system – typically single party majority or minority
- Premier appoints Executive from the elected MPPs
- Executive initiates policy, sets priorities
- Legislative Assembly considers policy, enacts laws, holds government accountable



# Research and Information Services

- A division of the Legislative Assembly, part of the Legislative Library
- Serve all MPPs
- 13 researchers – multidisciplinary subject specialists; 9 research librarians
- Customized research for MPPs, legislative committees, oral and written briefings



# Question 1

What is missing in policy makers' understanding of the role and complexities of research?



# Policy making and the Legislator's role

- Debate policy in bills introduced by Executive
- Question Period – question the Executive on any matter of public concern
- Legislative Committees – study legislative proposals, public policy issues
- Private Members' Bills – formulate and propose legislation
- Research Service assists MPPs with all of these functions



# What legislators need

## Members' Roundtable

- Objective information and analysis, not party spin – to debate, persuade, communicate, offer alternatives
- Want “understanding” – no time to read flood of information, no time to reflect
- Concise reports – time is limited
- Speed – as issues arise, timely
- Accuracy, reliability
- Manage and make sense of the barrage of information



# Research Complexities/Challenges

## Objective research in a highly political environment

- Identify best, most authoritative sources
- Must be accurate, balanced, fairly present all relevant views
- No bias, or omissions, no advocacy – inform, not persuade
- Do not lead the debate, but be constantly aware of emerging issues



# Particular challenge – novel issues

- E.g., same-sex marriage, assisted suicide
- How to frame the issue - e.g., human rights, protecting the vulnerable/society, criminal law, protection of children – affects the research
- To what degree do legislators bring fixed perspectives?



# Speed and timeliness

- sense that “the answer” exists on the Internet - research and analysis regarded as a search function
- making the response concise and understandable despite complexity



# Possible implications for subsidiarity model

- legislative level – issues are likely similar
- executive level – some insight to needs of legislators and how these can be managed
- Subsidiarity model - challenge to ensure these new decision-makers have access to quality information and analysis to make best decisions
- Legislators lack understanding of complexities – likely they will too – need for education, support



# Question 2

What are the crucial differences in the current role played by policy research, relative to past models and what further changes can be expected in the medium term?



# Our role at the Ontario legislature has not changed, but

- the way we do our work
- multiplicity of sources of information, and
- expectations of legislators have changed



# Internet is the prime driver of this change

- democratized access to information
- new ways of communicating, issue-oriented communities, creating content, influencing policy and decision making
- social networking tools – Web 2.0 – blogs, YouTube, web sites, chat, discussion forums, e-democracy initiatives



# Two examples

## 1. **Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile - Cybercitizenship**

- sponsor and co-creator of cybersocial networks – e.g., blog for the elderly
- trend watcher – emerging and not yet published



Leyes chilenas →

Proyectos de ley →

Historia de la ley

Tratados internacionales

Información territorial

Ley de Presupuesto. Art. 23

Boletín Legislativo

Biografías parlamentarias

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Mi comuna en cifras 2008

Portal Chile Asia Pacifico

Entrevistas a Parlamentarios

Blog Vive Asia

Blog Legal

Blog Ligas Mayores

Facebook Ley Chile

Facebook Ligas Mayores

Facebook Vive Asia

Audio Parlamentarios

TV Senado

Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile - BCN

La BCN
Senado
Cámara de Diputados
Catálogo
El ciudadano y la ley
Ayuda/contacto

**VIDEO TESTIMONIO**

**Movimiento Educación 2020 expone ante Cámara Baja**

26 de septiembre 2008 (duración:03:43)

Organiza 2.0: experiencias de la sociedad civil colaborando en la web

Ver más videos

Suscríbese a esta sección

**TRIBUNA CIUDADANA**

[Pregunta a tu parlamentario](#)

**MIRADA EN PROFUNDIDAD**

**Las leyes de excepción en favor de las zonas extremas de Chile**

Franquicias tributarias en busca de un mayor desarrollo y más y mejor mano de obra son los objetivos de estos beneficios legales especiales.

25 de septiembre 2008

Ver más temas

Suscríbese a esta sección

**DE QUÉ SE HABLA**

**Parlamentos de Chile y Perú estrechan lazos con miras al Asia Pacífico**

Invitados por el Congreso del Perú, la delegación chilena, encabezada por el presidente del Senado Adolfo Zaldívar,

**A MÍ ME IMPORTA**

**Diputado Eugenio Tuma Zedan (PPD) Comunas de Pitrufquén, Cholchol, Carahue, Freire, Nueva Imperial, Puerto Saavedra y Teodoro Schmidt “Mi lucha es ahora para que la banca mida a las personas por su línea de comportamiento ante los créditos”**

Presidente de la Comisión de Hacienda de la Cámara Baja, es considerado uno de los parlamentarios que más ha legislado en beneficio de las Pymes. Con la Ley DICOM, de su autoría, más de dos millones de personas pudieron ser borradas de los registros de morosidad. Pero son m ...

25 septiembre 2008

Ver video (duración 15:00)

Ver otras entrevistas

Suscríbese a esta sección

**LEY FÁCIL**

**Salida de menores al extranjero**

¿Quiénes requieren



## 2. Ontario Citizen's Assembly on Electoral Reform

- a unique exercise in citizen engagement in the province
- 103 randomly selected citizens, supported by a Secretariat
- empower CA members to deliberate and decide
- model for citizen dialogue on public policy questions





*"I am looking forward to being part of a groundbreaking experience and gaining an understanding of what my fellow citizens would like."*

*- John Daley, Assembly member*



**About the Assembly**

**What's New**

**Get Involved**

**The Classroom**

**Deliberation Room**

**Media Room**

[Home](#) / [The Classroom](#)

## The Classroom

**Billy Ballot**

**Learn with the Assembly**

**The Ballot Box with Dr. Rose**

**The Library**

**The Learning Team**

## The Classroom

Welcome to the Classroom! Here you will find everything members of the Citizens' Assembly used to learn about electoral systems.

Just as in any other classroom, you will find a wide variety of learning [materials](#).

These materials were developed by the Academic Director, in conjunction with the [Learning Team](#), for the specific purpose of helping to teach you about different families of electoral systems. We made an effort to select materials that, as a group, do not favour one system over another.

Because we recognize that not everyone is familiar with electoral systems we have included a wide range of materials. This way you can select the materials that suit you best as you progress in your learning.

Like any good classroom, we want to provide you with a comfortable learning environment, one that responds to the diverse learning needs of Citizens' Assembly members and the broader public.



# Possible implications for subsidiarity based model

- ability to use 2.0 social networks to support subsidiarity policy needs - ensure coordination, electronic classrooms, exchange information, best practices, watch for emerging trends in issues and policies
- Chile, Citizens' Assembly possible models



# Question 3

What institutional framework can more effectively structure the relationship between power and knowledge? What organizational model is most suited to the production of policy research? How can the independence of policy research be safeguarded?



- model used in Ontario and other Parliaments works in these environments
- established as an arm of the parliamentary administration, independent of government and available to all Members of the Legislature equally
- underscores independence, non-partisanship, objectivity



# Safeguarding the independence of policy research

- Structural and financial independence from policy makers
- recruitment/staff training – no political memberships, leave aside personal views
- review research to ensure no bias, assumptions, omissions, neutral language



# Possible implications for subsidiarity based model

## **Policy makers need access to objective, quality information and analysis**

- How to deliver/support to empower new policy and decision makers?
- strong library systems, linking to experts, policy researchers
- support self-education, emergence of cybercitizenship, new methods of communication



# References

- Soledad Ferriero and José Miguel Muga, *Understanding Cybersocial Network Trends for Innovation in Libraries*, *IFLA Journal*, Vol. 34:2 (2008), p. 160. Accessed at <http://www.ifla.org/V/iflaj/IFLA-Journal-2-2008.pdf>
- Biblioteca del Congreso Nacional de Chile <http://www.bcn.cl/>
- Ontario, Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform [http://www.citizensassembly.gov.on.ca/assets/Citizen%20Deliberative%20Decision%20Making\\_English.pdf](http://www.citizensassembly.gov.on.ca/assets/Citizen%20Deliberative%20Decision%20Making_English.pdf)
- Institute on Governance, *Citizen Deliberative Decision-making: Evaluation of the Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform*. Accessed at [http://www.citizensassembly.gov.on.ca/assets/Citizen%20Deliberative%20Decision%20Making\\_English.pdf](http://www.citizensassembly.gov.on.ca/assets/Citizen%20Deliberative%20Decision%20Making_English.pdf)

