

BARBADOS

People's Position Paper

Referendum Questions

A REFERENDUM ON THE CHANGE OF STATUS OF BARBADOS AND OTHER ISSUES

CONDUCT OF REFERENDUM

Overview

A referendum is a unique exercise in democracy. It will be the first time that the Parliament consults in this way with Barbadians. It invites the people to vote directly on a set of constitutional proposals which will affect the way they live. The magnitude of the task must be experienced, to be believed. There will be extensive innovations if it is done rightly and it will cost a tidy sum.

Strategies for Conduct of Referendum

There has to be a strict time table for the procurement of the results of the referendum.

- (1) A date certain must be announced for the commencement of a structured national dialogue antecedent (? months)
- (2) To a date certain for the submission of primary and supplementary questions formally proposed by organizations, community cells, youth, committees registered with the Chief Electoral Officer. Not all questions proposed will be included in the schedule to the referendum act.
- (3). A sub-committee of Parliament to settle the final referendum questions with or without reference as at (2)
- (3) The drafting of the referendum act to include schedule of approved question(s) and supplementary questions as settled.
- (4) Date certain over a minimum of 21 days for the widest circulation of the draft referendum bill to include in schedule both primary and supplementary questions.
- (5) Within 21 days, piloting the referendum act through Parliament (House and Senate) in all its stages and the proclamation of the Referendum Act
- (6) Issue of Writs of Referendum will follow and the polling day(s) for Referendum set for 21days hence or July 04 2006,(my recommendation) the historic anniversary of the signing of the Barbados Independence Order

- (7) There will be a minimum of 14 days set for the Return of Writs and announcements of the results of the Referendum Poll.
- (7) Following announcement of the results of the referendum poll, the draft Constitution will be completed
- (8) And dates certain for the widest circulation of the new draft constitution for further public consideration and comment
- (8) Dates certain for passage through Parliament (House and Senate) and proclamation of the new repatriated Constitution set for coming into operation on the day before the 10th General Election November 05 2006 agreed to
- (9) proclaimed and
- (10) a date not less than thirty six days nor more than sixty-three days after (8) to complete apparatus for the Election Day and the holding of election (s) on or before 5th November 2006.
- (11) the attainment of the status of a Republic on November 30 2006. There must be a period of transition between 6th November and 30th November 2006 during which the Prime Minister remains in office until the President is sworn in (if the people accept to have an Executive President)

Other Matters

- **One or more primary questions must be put to voters like -**
 - 1. Should Barbados proceed to the status of Republic **YES / NO**
 - 2. Should the Head of State and the Head of Government be vested in the same person. **YES / NO**
 - 3. Should the Senate Chamber be retained? **YES / NO**
 - 4. If it is, should the Senators be elected? **YES / NO**
 - 5. {(a) by direct voting of Electors?
{(b) by a Community Electoral College?
{(c) by other form of proportional election?
 - 6. Should a new political community order be established with the election of community councillors ? **YES / NO**
 - 7. Should instrument of recall for moral turpitude, bribery be entrenched? **YES / NO**
 - 8. Should the voting age be reduced to sixteen years? **YES / NO**
 - 9. Should the State meet all lawful election expenses? **YES / NO**
 - 10. Should there be a general election before proceeding to the status of Republic. **YES / NO**

Supplementary questions for inclusion in the referendum must also be put to the voters (*not limited to those below*)

1. Should Barbados legalize abortions, homosexuality and prostitution ? **YES / NO**
 2. Should universal free education be abolished? **YES / NO**
 3. Should the death penalty be retained? **YES / NO**
- **A strict time table must be adhered to – (*democracy is a slow process. Citizens must be given adequate time to contemplate the issues and exercise their franchise without duress*)**
 - The Draft Constitution should be in a state of preparation embodying all the likely answers and varied as soon as the Referendum is played out.

The legislative framework

- Draft referendum act prepared, submitted to Parliament, passed
- Proclamation of date of the referendum
- One or more questions to be put, must be approved by both Houses of Parliament before the Governor General assents and issues writs of referendum for the conduct of the national referendum

Planning the referendum

There are four stages to a referendum

- The launch to initiate public discussion
- Enumeration
- Revision of voters lists and
- Polling Day

Electoral and Boundaries Commission is charged with the conduct of Referendum by the provision of the Referendum Act and the tenth general election coterminously.

The preparation of the referendum ballots

- Primary ballots
- Supplementary ballots

Revision of polling divisions – from thirty to thirty two

Access to suffrage for Barbadians sixteen years and over

Appointment and Training of Returning Officers, Poll Clerks etc

Voting procedures to a large extent as for general election

Parliamentary Committee to settle consequential questions.

Implementation of the Referendum

***Referendum Committees**

Returning officer repository for registration of committees

Lists setting out committees according to location, committee name, registration date, referendum positions, activity area e.g.

Lists to be returned to Chief Electoral Officer

Committees may exercise themselves on all matters of concern.

Allocation of broadcasting time on request

Political parties, interest groups, committees may request broadcasting time

Enumeration and revision

From age of sixteen years

Reaching the Voters

Barbadians expect, indeed are demanding the information they need to exercise their franchise.

Advertising

- As necessary
-

Media Relations

Directed to the general public

- News briefings
- Printed voter information

Public Relations

- Senators, Members of Parliament, Missions Abroad, Political Parties, Pressure Groups, Interest Groups like Trade Unions, Private Sector Organizations, Community Groups, Churches. Ad Hoc Referendum Committees

Public Enquiries

Procedures, forms, instruction manuals, information must be prepared, printed and circulated

Conduct of voting

Special voting rules

Advance Voting

Overseas Voting

Ordinary Polling Day(s)

Voting results

Official Results of Primary questions

Results of supplementary questions

Reporting and Evaluation

Review with Returning Officers
Comments from public

Redrafting and Passage of the New Constituion

Setting of Election Date

Calling date within three months of referendum

Actual election within a further three month

GENERAL ELECTION

If the primary questions are answered by a majority in the AFFIRMATIVE a general parliamentary (house and senate) election And community assemblies elections must be called on a date certain within three months of the announcement of the poll (s) before a date is set for the day appointed for the assumption of the status of Republic.

THE REPUBLIC DAY Since you cannot have a republic without Independence, Independence Day should be superseded by Republic Day on November 30 2006. (*St. Andrews Day)

N.B. Time tabling should be worked backwards from Republic Day – 30th November 2006

E&OE

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