On October 10, the voters of Ontario head to the polls to elect a new parliament. And, for the first time in 83 years, there is a referendum question to decide upon regarding electoral reform. So, with a little over a week to go until the big day, Special Projects Editor Joe Turcotte sits down with the election’s major players and offers a glimpse into the Kitchener-Waterloo ridings race and the referendum so that you will be prepared to go to the polls on election day.

**Elizabeth Witmer**

**Progressive Conservative Party**

Elizabeth Witmer has served as the MPP for the Kitchener-Waterloo riding, and in that role she has been the Minister of Labour, Minister of Health, Minister of Long-Term Care, Minister of the Environment and the Deputy Premier and Minister of Education. Currently she serves as the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and the Critic for Health and Long-Term Care.

Elizabeth Witmer on education:

“The promise that we would make to you is that no student will be denied access across a university or a college. We believe that we need to expand the loan programs, but more importantly I feel we need to increase the needs of the students. "

Jeanette Greenwood-Speers

**Green Party**

Jeanette Greenwood-Speers, as President of the Green Party and Former Deputy Leader of the Greens Party of Ontario, Greenwood-Speers has had an active voice in Ontario's political landscape for years to come. Despite the fact that the debate between the current political parties (FPF and MMP) remains a top priority, the proposed FPF system (first past the post system) is now under discussion after the referendum on September 20.

Jeanette Greenwood-Speers on environmental issues:

“For the first time in 45 years, the voters of Ontario will have the ability to decide the fate of a referendum question. While the debate over prohibition may be a lost battle for now, I believe that the MMP system is designed to avoid just that form of minority. Under the current system, decisions are an all-or-nothing affair. In particular, Dr. Andrus Pejić, Laurier political science associate professor, says that right now a party that wins the majority of seats has little percent of the power. It is Pejić and other proponents of MMP like him that believe that FPF needs to be replaced, and that the proposed alternatives to the current system need to find a way for everyone to be represented. "I'll change the way that we think about politics, it will change the way that we make decisions," says Pejić. "It's important to have a system that encourages political parties to think more clearly about what they are doing and the consequences, I think it will just be more amenable to votes." "We need to increase accessibility by rolling back tuition rates to 2005 levels, and then we are going to aggressively pursue that. And that will come in combination with an increase in operating funding for the school's operating costs and infrastructure. If we continue to understand the operating costs of universities, it will inevitably come back to the students. This is a $200 million commitment, what we're doing is shifting those costs areas that will beneficial and we are shifting those to areas of business and corporations that can afford it." Catherine Fife on the environment:

"We have a very strong platform on the environment. It includes an aggressive conservation strategy, which includes setting new low-income and middle-income housing. It's modelled after the Manitoba government of Gary Doer, where people can get interest free loans for energy-efficient appliances, insulation and renovation and efficiency. As well, we're looking to put 1,250 solar hot water systems in homes, that will create a lot of jobs. That's a good thing because we are currently facing a manufacturing deficit in the tools and equipment. And we are looking at investing higher in green renewable micro hydro, solar and new wind technology as well." Catherine Fife on why Laurier students should vote for her:

"I think we need to stop following the well-worn path of mediocrity as far as progressive policies and address the core issues of poverty for children and the working poor I think that there have been segments of society that feel they were left out in the past 17 years. Mrs. Witmer has held this riding. I'm coming into this situation with new energy and fresh ideas and a progressive platform, which is automatic. Students actually have the power in this riding in particular to shift the balance of power. In that way, we can have a government that is actually putting their needs first, then they can end 17 years of non-partisan secondary education. I'm offering to 23% cut that happened under the Harris-Eves government.”

Elizabeth Witmer

**Government and GR/3, 2007**