



**Record of Proceedings
of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform
January 24-25, 2004**

Saturday, January 24, 2004 (AM Plenary Session)

In attendance: J. Blaney, Chair
154 Assembly members
5 staff
12 facilitators
Evaluator: J. Shapiro
40-50 observers
5-6 media

Absent:
P. Barakat
A. Davis
J. Gill
R. Monk
A. Rankin
R. Walberg

Recording secretary: L. Perra

M. Jarbek led the Assembly in the singing of the National Anthem.

Opening remarks

The Chair welcomed the first-time attendees: Diana Cochran and Rosemary Vanderbilt. In his introductory comments the Chair noted the diversity of the Assembly and the significant community involvement of the members. He indicated that the evaluations from the previous session were positive and much appreciated by the staff. He encouraged members to continue completing them. He then introduced the matter of the public hearings and referred further discussion on same until Sunday morning.

Question Period

The questions focused on the mandate of the Citizens Assembly and the public hearings process.

Assembly Business: Recommendation #3

The Chair introduced Recommendation #3 and asked members to discuss its contents among themselves during the day. The topic would be given further discussion on Sunday morning.

Presentation: Elections, Representation and Parliament (K. Carty)

K. Carty provided an overview of the learning phase:

1. Political values
2. Parliamentary government
3. Electoral systems: plurality, majority
4. Electoral systems: Proportional, single transferable vote, mixed
5. Changing systems
6. What do we think about all of this?

and turned the session over to C. Sharman.

During the presentation, questions on the following items were raised:

- Monarchial structure
- Authority of the Legislative Assembly
- Non-confidence votes
- Status of cabinet ministers during a change of premier/government
- Open or secret ballot voting in legislature
- Role of Lieutenant Governor in the formation of the government
- Role of party discipline
- Coalition and minority governments

The presentation concluded and Assembly members moved into discussion groups.

PM Plenary Session

Presentation: Political Parties and Party Competition (K. Carty)

Questions on the following items were raised:

- Role of the party whip
- Criteria for forming a political party
- Role of opposition parties

The presentation concluded and Assembly members moved into discussion groups.

Plenary Session—Wrap-up

The plenary session provided an opportunity for questions from the day's proceedings.

The following items were raised:

- Role of the Assembly in establishing thresholds
- The outline or framework of the Final Report
- Other electoral reform issues—finances, age of voters, candidate selection
- Promoting the recommendations of the Assembly

Sunday, January 25, 2004 (AM Plenary Session)

Public Hearings (L. Perra)

Leo Perra provided an overview of the public hearings process and its schedule to members. A number of suggestions for changes to the proposed schedule were offered for consideration. Updates for the schedule to be posted on the web and in the Discussion Forum.

Recommendation #3

Following a brief introduction by the Chair, two opposing views on the provision of an opportunity for presentations to the full Assembly were expressed.

The Chair suggested that the discussion be tabled until the next session.

It was agreed that a discussion on this topic would be started in the Discussion Forum.

Presentation: BC Electoral Experiments (C. Sharman)

Questions raised during the presentation included:

- Multi-member districts
- Role of proportional representation processes in producing weak or strong governments
- The impact of geography on representation
- The position of the Supreme Court on the matter of representation

Plenary Wrap-Up Questions:

A few questions were raised; however, the time was used to outline the preparatory work for the next weekend.

Owing to the previous discussion and growing interest, the Chair suggested that the next Sunday morning session be started earlier to discuss Recommendation #3.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:10 p.m.