

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

CHILLIWACK PUBLIC HEARING
DATED 18 MAY 2004
AT THE RHOMBUS HOTEL

THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS A BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE PRESENTATION TO THE CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON ELECTORAL REFORM. IT ATTEMPTS TO CAPTURE THE KEY ISSUES AND ARGUMENTS THAT WERE PRESENTED AND DISCUSSED DURING THE PUBLIC HEARING. IN SOME INSTANCES, THE PRESENTER HAS ALSO MADE A SUBMISSION TO THE ASSEMBLY AND THIS IS ACCESSIBLE VIA THE WEBSITE AT WWW.CITIZENSASSEMBLY.BC.CA BY CLICKING ON "GET INVOLVED". IF SUCH A SUBMISSION IS AVAILABLE, IT WILL BE NOTED AT THE END OF THIS REPORT.

Raymond Smith

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

Single member plurality with comprehensive oaths for majority or coalition government.

KEY THEMES

Mr. Smith discussed the problem of the lack of accountability in the current political system, stemming from the lack of formal codification of the responsibilities of MLA's.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Smith recommended that:

1. An Oath of Obligations be sworn by Members of a majority Government before the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, or a designate requiring them:
 - a. To govern in accordance with their mandate which is appended to their Oath.
 - b. To give priority to constituents concerns.
 - c. To apply the principles of full disclosure and accountability.
 - d. To give precedence to their obligations in both budgeting and routine business in the House before they can sit or vote.
2. This Oath apply to Members severally and jointly.
3. Violation of the Oath result in the vote of that Member being nullified.
4. Political parties nominating candidates also be required to file a mandate with the Chief Electoral Officer on the day following 'writ' day to be eligible to nominate candidates and all mandates become matters of public record.
5. To make a mandate eligible for filing, comprehensive information would have to be provided regarding the what, where, when, why, and benefit to tax payers for matters valued in excess of a fixed dollar amount.
6. Changes (deletions or additions) to a 'Standing Mandate' only be permitted by referendum or by approval of, for example, 80% of the House.
7. Mr. Smith also recommended that special attention be paid to the fact that we are carrying a significant burden for social programs, so the issue of financial viability should be considered when recommending any electoral system.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

- Q What do you mean by mandate?
- A They would take a mandate from the voters to the House, and I assume they would have a mandate when the election started
- Q Who determines if they are in violation of their Oath?
- A The idea is that when you elect the member you also elect their mandate, so I suppose it would become a permanent procedure for the Clerk of the House or the Speaker. This is a framework that is not cast in stone.
- Comment Our mandate does not include enlarging the House, so you need not be concerned with increased costs.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

- Q Does this system preclude members from changing their mandate?
- A No, this only applies to the Members of a majority government. If they wanted to change their mandate they could do that with approval of around 80% of the House.