

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

COQUITLAM PUBLIC HEARING DATED
1 JUNE 2004 AT THE EXECUTIVE PLAZA INN

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.

Aaron Rahn

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

A system of individual and independent democratic elections.

KEY THEMES

Aaron Rahn proposed a system of participatory democracy in order to reform the current system of “democratic dictatorship” where the vast majority of power in the province is vested in the Premier. He argued in favour of the abolishment of political parties, and for candidates to take oaths of individual conscience and responsibility. Both political candidates and elected MLAs would be prevented from forming voting blocks or alliances. Members of the legislature would hold secondary elections for ministerial and opposition positions based on a set of selection criteria. The legislature would sit for 4-8 week sessions, with a four week break between sessions during which information campaigns and public voting using the internet could take place for issues of major importance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Aaron Rahn recommended that the Citizens Assembly include a recommendation in their final report that political parties be banned forever from our system of governance.

Quote: “Every vote in our legislature must be a vote of conscience, a vote that represents the deep and honest thoughts of the individual who represents the populace of their riding.”

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

One member of the panel sought clarification on elements of the presentation.

Q	I’m on the internet but I really don’t know much about computers. Couldn’t you give people the option of using the internet or a 1800 number?
A	I agree that there are lots of different technology options, and we could use a combination of them.

Comment from panel: There were no further comments from the panel.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Following this presentation quite a few members of the audience had questions.

Q	The only problem I could see with internet voting is that a substantial proportion of the province is still without access to the internet.
A	I've thought of that, and we could establish a neighbourhood voting station for people in the area without internet access, or people could use the computer facilities at public libraries.
Q	I've lived in small areas with non-partisan elections and it's not always the rosy picture that you present. Instead, I couldn't tell candidates apart because everyone aims for the centre and they know that if they express views that are slightly different that they'll lose votes. How would you solve that problem?
A	People need to learn to think for themselves, if you're offered the chance to participate then people will have more incentive to become educated and the media will become more effective. We all need to interview candidates and ask them penetrating questions
Q	I've been involved in local government which is ostensibly non-partisan but we all know that isn't the case. How would you get thousands of people in the province to be interested enough to participate?
A	I don't think that it is important that everyone votes. I think we would find that the ones that are most effected by the issue will be the ones that vote.
Q	In your proposal, can members be re-elected or can they only stand once?
A	They can return as often as members of the constituency choose. I think that experience is valuable because people become more seasoned.

Comment: There were no further comments from the audience.

SUBMISSION: NO