

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

DUNCAN PUBLIC HEARING DATED
8 JUNE 2004 AT THE TRAVELODGE
SILVER BRIDGE

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.

Robert Baker

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

A very simple to implement, yet powerful change in our electoral system could radically change the nature of politics in BC and Canada. Each voter is give one choice vote and one reject vote.

KEY THEMES

Robert Baker argued that modifying the First Past the Post (FPP) system to address its current problems would remove the need to introduce proportional representation. He proposed that we keep the FPP system in place but that each voter should be able to cast one ‘for’ vote and one ‘against’ vote. Mr Baker described the advantages of this system as including its simplicity, the absence of any need for major changes or voter re-education and therefore its low implementation costs. Voters simply cast their ‘for’ vote for their preferred candidate and their ‘against’ vote for the candidate they least want to be their representative. He predicted that this system will increase voter turnout because voters are often more concerned about voting against a candidate than for a new government. Mr Baker also argued that his modification to the system could prevent parties from embracing special interest politics and reduce extreme policy swings because unpopular policy platforms would garner a large number of no votes. He explained that this system would compel successful candidates to pay more attention to voters’ wishes and to vote to represent those wishes in the legislature regardless of party discipline. In this way, Mr Baker predicted that control of the province would be re-instated in the hands of the people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Robert Baker recommended modifying the First Past the Post electoral system to give each voter one vote for a candidate and one vote against a candidate.

Quote: “Sometimes rather than voting for their choice, people vote for the candidate most likely to beat the one they really dislike. With this system, they can vote ‘for’ their favourite and ‘against’ their least favourite. Actually having this opportunity should bring voters back to the polls in droves.”

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

There were three members of the panel who sought clarification on elements of the presentation.

Q	How does it work?
A	A voter would enter the polling booth and would be given two different stickers to place on the ballot. One sticker ‘for’ a candidate and one sticker ‘against’ a

	candidate.
Q	How would you count the ballots?
A	The negative votes would be subtracted from the positive votes. I think this would be a great boon for the parties because then the parties would know exactly how many people voted for them. In this system you would not have to vote strategically.

Comment from panel There were no comments from the panel.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Following this presentation a member of the audience had a question.

Q	This won't protect against special interest groups and small parties from getting in. Am I missing something?
A	It would take me a while to show you my model, but it is included in my submission which is on the assembly website. Another important effect of this system is that because disparate points of view that focus on special interest groups would get a lot of negative votes, there would be more incentive for parties to seek to represent a broader range of views and eventually we wouldn't need to have parties in government.

Comment: There were no comments from the audience.

SUBMISSION: YES

SUBMISSION ID# 0040