

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.

Pat Barron

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

Participatory democracy and referendum.

KEY THEMES

Pat Barron spoke of the need for direct democracy in British Columbia. He suggested that the Assembly consider the Swiss system of government where citizens can propose constitutional change and new legislation. He recommended that Canadians have the right to the Popular Initiative of the Swiss Cantons or the Statutory Initiatives of 39 of the American states. Mr Barron argued that the collective experience and wisdom of the total citizenry is far superior to that of political elites. He discussed the experience of the Rossland community in the Kootenays in 1990, when Rossland voters could take council bylaws to referendum and sponsor their own legislation and told the hearing that this had been very effective. Mr Barron proposed that the Assembly recommend a system of participatory democracy including mechanisms for recall, referendum and initiative. He explained that this would remove power from the federal, provincial and municipal governments and allow rule by the people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Pat Barron recommended a system of participatory democracy, including mechanism for recall, referendum and initiative.

Quote: "Wake up Canadians, and implement Participatory Democracy – recall, referendum and initiative –and don't wait until 2010. We have been deceived for years at the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government, whilst millions have died in two world wars to save democracy, that is rule by the people."

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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

Q	The Swiss system that you refer to, could you give us a brief overview?
A	I suggest that you read, 'The Referendum – Bring it On' by W. Downe, published in December 1990.

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	I believe that the issue that you find difficult is that little or no integrity is held by our politicians. The answer that I've come up with is the none of the above option. It seems to be a very simple solution. Does that interest you?
A	I couldn't agree with you more. Without question the words uttered before an election have nothing to do with the actions taken after an election.

SUBMISSION: NO