

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.

Brian White

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

My experience with Single Transferable Vote and how it will strengthen democracy in BC (Irish voting system).

KEY THEMES

Brian White explained that he had lived in Ireland for 35 years and had personally found that it is very easy to vote in a Single Transferable Vote (STV) system. Although proponents of MMP have argued that STV is too complicated, he told the hearing that all voters need to be able to do is to count to ten and to read the names of a number of candidates. He corrected an earlier presenter who had suggested that Green Party candidates would not be elected under STV by pointing to the experience of the Irish Green Party which was succeeded in having representatives elected under STV. He also noted that Ireland has elected a female President with an STV system.

Mr White argued that the major advantage of STV is that it provides more choice to the voter. He explained that a large party would normally stand a number of candidates and that the voters are able to choose which party candidate they prefer. He argued that the system gives more feedback to political parties about the preferences of their supporters, because the party observers watching the ballot count can see whether their voters are giving their additional preferences to parties from the left, right or centre. Mr White explained that STV is more proportional than the current system and results in fewer wasted votes. He contrasted the example of a five seat STV district where 80 per cent of votes directly contribute to the election of at least one representative with a single-member STV riding where only 30-55 per cent of the votes usually contribute to electing a candidate. Mr White supported the introduction of multi-member ridings in British Columbia, arguing that with multiple candidates from the same party competing against each other the power of the party machine is curtailed. He explained that candidates were required to act co-operatively to ensure the transfer of votes between parties, which meant that candidates needed to appeal to a wide range of social groups to be elected. Mr White suggested a 'none of the below' modification for the introduction of STV in British Columbia, where voters could express a number of preferences and then indicate that they did not support any of the remaining candidates. He concluded by stating that Ireland has enjoyed a booming economy under fifteen years of minority and coalition governments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Brian White recommended the introduction of STV in British Columbia.

Quote: "Under STV, the public has the power to rid the party of its robots. You can choose the local man or lady of substance to represent you in that party instead of parachuted Mr Bland and the party cannot stop you!"

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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

Q	I'd be interested in finding out what sort of impact STV has on participation in politics by women and minority groups.
A	We've had a woman elected president, and you could probably check the number of MPs from each group. I know that in the 1970s there were a number of Jewish MPs elected, and there has been a Muslim doctor elected in a conservative rural electorate. Ireland isn't as multicultural as Canada but it has done all right in electing minorities and women.

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

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Following this presentation quite a member of the audience had questions.

Q	So you'd have to have multi-member districts?
A	You don't have to, but it's certainly better to do so because then you get more minority representation.
Q	But in BC you'd have to combine the current districts together and make them bigger?
A	When I voted in Ireland, I would often cross party lines to have a local represent me. But the whole community has to make that decision.

SUBMISSION: YES

SUBMISSION ID# 0414