

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

KAMLOOPS PUBLIC HEARING
DATED 17 JUNE 2004
AT THE COAST CANADIAN 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.

Tony Brumell

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

I am very concerned about the loss of democracy and huge majority governments that tend to cause voter apathy.

KEY THEMES

Tony Brumell told the hearing that it is imperative that we introduce workable and equitable reform, otherwise democracy could become extinct in British Columbia. He described the tendency of British Columbians to vote governments out of power resulting in alternating single term governments with policy swings and argued that we need a system to prevent polarization and flip-flopping back and forth. Mr Brumell urged the Assembly to select an electoral system that will get all citizens of British Columbia involved, including those who are not voting. He argued that the current First Past the Post electoral system no longer works for everyone, because many non-voters are poorly educated and financially challenged, and need to learn how to make democracy work in their favour. He suggested that civics courses should be taught in schools to teach young people about the obligations of democracy and instill a sense of pride in the political system. Mr Brumell supported the introduction of mandatory voting and also proposed that the voting age could be lowered to 16 for voters who pass certain civics courses. He advocated the introduction of proportional representation. He argued that minority governments may not pass as much legislation, but the legislation they do pass benefits more people as it is unlikely to be reversed by a subsequent government.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Tony Brumell recommended the introduction of proportional representation in BC.

He also recommended the introduction of mandatory voting.

Quote: "There is a saying in BC that says 'we don't vote governments into power, we vote them out of power.'"

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

There were no comments or questions from the panel.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

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

Q	I'd like to hear more about mandatory voting. Can you describe how that would work?
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A	I'm not a political scientist so I don't have a lot of the answers. I think that making the vote compulsory would have an initial backlash for the first two elections or so, but just because we live in a free country doesn't mean we are free to let it go to hell.
Q	How do you think lowering the voting age would improve democracy in Canada? Having gone through social studies class in high school I can tell you there is very little interest in the democratic process.
A	I think there should be a mandatory civics class and when you have passed a civics exam then I think that apathy would change. I have a lot of faith in young people. I just think they need a little bit more education to become more involved.

Comment: “One of the advantages of mandatory voting is that the parties are not occupied with identifying voters and getting people to the polls. So you become more focused on the issues. In Australia there are also provisions for conscientious objectors.”

“I think apathy reigns in British Columbia. And we need to get those people out to the polls and show them that their vote makes a difference.”

SUBMISSION: NO