

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

MAPLE RIDGE PUBLIC HEARING
DATED 19 MAY 2004
AT THOMAS HANEY SCHOOL

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.

Rick Benoit

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

How I envisage computer voting. Voters' rights.

KEY THEMES

Mr. Benoit expressed the need for individuals to think outside the box and to look to computers for the future. The presenter discussed the need for individuals to have the right to change their votes; vote for candidates that are not on the ballot; and to be able to vote for or against government legislation through a computer registered system. Mr. Benoit was not in favour of government by referendum as that may produce unintended results via the participation of uneducated citizens in the process. Under this system, Mr. Benoit stated that we would have government, not by elected representatives or the people, but government by the people through the elected representatives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The presenter recommended the use of political mentors who may collate the votes of others. Under this system, the voting power of MLA's in the House is in accordance with how many votes they have collected in the community. Further, Mr. Benoit advocated an online register of the votes cast by representatives in the legislature. The presenter also supported a system in which any individual could propose a law, and all laws proposed would be grouped online so that Canadians can pick and choose among them. When 63% of Canadians have voted for a proposed piece of legislation then it should become law.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

- Q Would this system of collecting votes not create a power struggle as parties vie for your votes?
- A We already have a massive power struggle and this would not make it worse. The trouble with the party system is the difficulty of getting enough people together to even start a party. I'm talking about eliminating the party system and making it about individuals gathering votes. The person who gains the most votes should be made Prime Minister and then the Deputy Prime Minister and so on after that. I don't believe in any of the parties, I would rather delegate my vote to someone else and they could delegate them to

someone else and so on after that.

Q What about people who do not have a computer?

A They need to go to a library. People are just not interested enough.

Q Would you be in favour of independent candidates running?

A Everyone would be independent. You are still thinking inside the box. Whoever you think is more knowledgeable than you or that you agree with or believe in, you put your faith in and delegate your vote to that person, and you have the power to take that support back again. If they lie to us then they are out the next day.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q It seems that the essence of your concern is about responsiveness so that the main concerns of British Columbians rise to the front. You obviously have passion for this topic so why not get involved?

A I haven't found a party that I totally believe in as yet, but I have found a few people that I believe in.

Comment I disagree with the idea of delegating your vote to someone and that they may then be cumulatively delegated to another person. I believe that this would be an abdication of the responsibility of individual citizens to vote.

With regard to the legalization of marijuana, the Liberal government just pushed through a bill that will legalize possession of small quantities of marijuana. It is in Hansard online.

With regard to the internet, this will make it easier for citizens to be familiar with what is happening provincially and federally. As more people learn how to use the internet there will be a great sea-change in people's effective use of the internet.

Comment

I'm not sure that your proposal would get enough people involved in the system, as the turnout at this public hearing and others reflects the low level of citizen engagement with politics.

Comment

I have run as an independent in the last two elections and a lot of people have brought up the idea you discussed for a clear ballot box.