

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.

Robert Hornsey

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

A presentation in favour of the adoption of MMP.

KEY THEMES

Mr. Hornsey expressed his delight with the Citizens' Assembly process as it marked the voluntary opening up of democracy by those in power. The presenter discussed the need for practical democracy to live up to the theory in terms of issues such as voter turnout. Mr. Hornsey questioned why people weren't voting and who constitutes the disenfranchised elements of the electorate. The presenter stated that factors such as increasing voter disaffection and apathy are what proportional representation (PR) was designed to address. Mr. Hornsey stated that PR would bring people back into the system and empower them to come out and vote by giving a voice to the voiceless. It is no longer a question of maintaining the current system it is a question of what form of proportional democracy is best for British Columbia. The overwhelming evidence is against perpetuating a system that elects undesirable candidates; creates yo-yo policy making; produces artificial majorities; and exaggerated majorities that provide parties with an undeserved mandate. It is time to let the system go as it is damaging and costly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The presenter recommended a change to MMP to enable the fair translation of votes cast into seats won. Mr. Hornsey advocated retaining beneficial elements of the current system such as local representation, while reforming some of the undesirable components by providing an element of proportionality. Local representatives are necessary as they are familiar with the individuals and problems of a riding. Under this system of MMP voters would have two representatives, a local member and a party list member (elected from a province-wide list). Mr. Hornsey recommended that in order to save costs, the constituency boundaries should be adjusted to mirror those of federal ridings. This would produce approximately 39 local representatives, and 39 or 40 list members. Finally Mr. Hornsey recommended a 5% threshold to prevent the proliferation of too many minor parties.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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| Q | Do you think it is feasible to have province wide proportionality even for smaller communities? |
| A | Absolutely, more so for the smaller communities. |

Q Designing a system in which the boundaries of provincial ridings mirror those of the federal system means enlarging constituencies significantly; how do we address that?

A One of the things I think about democracy is that it has to work for people or be kicked out. So commonly under MMP parties run local candidates plus a party list. So an intelligent party would look at who is voiceless and place two or three people from such places (or minority, or youth) candidates high on their list so if they got significant support they would move first. Or, alternatively, true statesmen would run on this list as they are willing to speak for the province as a whole and not just for their own backyard.

Q Are you in favour of a closed or an open list system?

A I'm not proposing one or the other. One of the strengths of our system is that it is not a free-for-all. So I would favour parties running slates and advocating why they chose these particular candidates. But if a party of one can muster more than 5% of the vote, they get a seat. That way a women's or a minority or a youth advocate can get elected without having to join a party such as the Greens.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q Could you tell us how the second representative ends up in the legislature under MMP?

A You could have two votes; the bottom line principle is that if there were 39 ridings and 78 people elected that would mean you could only elect 39 local representatives and if you got 30% of the vote as a party you would get 30% of the seats, so depending on how many local seats you won, you would top up with the list seats so you get 30% of the seats.

Q How does an independent candidate get elected when they need more than 5% of the vote?

A In a democracy, if you are a parade leader and you don't have any followers then you don't have a parade. Democracy is about finding people who agree with you and being able to lead them. If an individual had a disagreement with their party and wanted to run as an independent, as someone with principles and expertise, you might vote for them.

Q Would an independent run in the constituency, and would you have two votes one for the independent in the constituency and one for the party or a write-in ballot?

A I think that there should be an opportunity for write-in ballots. It should be up to the candidate if they want to run in the constituency or if they want to run on the list.