

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

PORT ALBERNI PUBLIC HEARING DATED
9 JUNE 2004 AT HANSEN HALL

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.

Jack Thornburgh

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

A presentation in support of a New Zealand style MMP electoral system.

KEY THEMES

Jack Thornburgh introduced himself as the Chair of the local chapter of the Council of Canadians and a Green Party member. He argued that fair and equitable voting system is the bedrock of a democratic system. Mr Thornburgh expressed concern with the disproportionality of the election result in 2001. He was also concerned that 80 per cent of youth in BC don't bother to vote in provincial elections, because they feel that their vote is wasted unless they vote for winning candidate. Mr Thornburgh spoke in support of proportional representation. He discussed New Zealand's MMP electoral system and suggested that New Zealanders seem content with their new system. He told the hearing that he preferred coalition government and governments with strong oppositions. Mr Thornburgh predicted that MMP in BC would result in greater consensus over important regional issues, and less adversarial government. He argued that we need a consensual government to address important environmental issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Jack Thornburgh recommended the introduction of MMP in British Columbia.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

There were no questions or comments from the panel.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

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

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| Q | I think there are two aspects that haven't been referred to. It seems absurd that members in the legislature have to vote in public, it puts tremendous pressure on them to conform to party line. I'm also concerned about party cloning which forces local member to conform to party. Proportional representation won't have its full effect while this is still the case. |
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| A | I don't need to respond because that says it all. |
| Q | How would you get youth involved in this process as well as in voting? |
| A | I haven't gotten that far yet, but I am in contact with a lot of late teens early twenties through my work. |
| Q | What could the assembly do to encourage youth? |
| A | I don't think there's an easy answer but it's really important. |
| Q | It strikes me that it's not just about feeling that a vote is wasted, because older people also feel that their vote is wasted but they still feel a duty to vote. I think that Canadians don't give their young people enough education about |
| A | (Facilitator) There's not a lot of evidence that teaching kids about civics actually makes them vote less. It's a bit like religion: sometimes teaching them about it puts them off. |

SUBMISSION: NO