

# PRESENTATION SUMMARY

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PRINCE GEORGE PUBLIC HEARING DATED  
10 MAY 2004 AT THE PRINCE GEORGE  
CIVIC CENTRE

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](http://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.

# William (Bill) Barnes

## Value Vote

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### DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

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Reforming the ballot to give the voter clarity of their opinion and power input for government action ([www.valuevote.ca](http://www.valuevote.ca)).

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### KEY THEMES

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Bill Barnes argued that our current system is failing because we feel voting is an exercise in futility. He proposed that we change the voting system to favour the voter rather than political parties. This would require changing the ballot paper, which Mr Barnes considers to be the greatest defect of the current political system. Currently, people are restricted to using only one check mark on the ballot to express all of their political concerns.

Mr Barnes recommended the adoption of the electoral system which he has designed, known as the 'value vote' system. He explained that value vote system adds the opportunity to discipline politicians to the ballot while enabling citizens to remain loyal to their political philosophy. Part A of the ballot asks for either a check mark or a line. A check mark selects a candidate or party while the drawing of a line through the name of a candidate or party indicates a vote of dissatisfaction. This means that voters no longer have to give their vote to a party with whom they may disagree or choose not to vote. Part B of the ballot makes space available for direct in-put from voters to the newly elected government. Mr Barnes argued that the value vote system will stabilise politics, because voters can express their real political preferences rather than being reduced to voting out unpopular governments.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr Barnes recommended the adoption of the 'Value Vote' electoral system in BC, as outlined in his submission.

*Quote: "Ancient Greece introduced democracy to the world and British Columbia will be remembered for giving democracy back to the people."*

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### QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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There were three members of the panel who sought clarification on elements of the presentation.

Q	On the value voting ballot, do you think the ballot structure will enhance or decrease voter turnout?
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A	It will definitely enhance voter turnout. Everyone I've spoken to about this system has agreed that it gives you much more incentive to vote because you can really express yourself.
Q	Will this system eliminate the spoiled ballot?
A	There could still be spoiled ballots because there would be rules restricting how people can use the ballot in the same way as there are now. For example, if you wrote outside the lines in Part B that could be a spoiled ballot.
Q	Would your ballot work with a preferential balloting system, where you order the candidates who you like, 1, 2 or 3?
A	I suppose it would. But I think that most people have a political philosophy which they either want to stick with or to discipline the parties for not meeting that philosophy. This system means that people who normally support a party but who aren't happy with that government can cast a discipline vote without having to vote for the opposition.
Q	So do the discipline votes cancel out the positive votes?
A	No, it's more an indication of support, so that parties cannot claim that they have the mandate of the majority if there are a large number of discipline votes.
Q	Would this increase voter turnout among young people?
A	The young people I've spoken to really like this system, especially the bottom part where you can express your personal views.
Q	I'm not really clear about how Part B works?
A	There would be a pre-set percentage, for example if 5 per cent of people identified a particular issue as being important, it would be mandatory that the issue is considered by a committee. The committee would only have one elected official, and the other members would be from the general public, nominated by the political parties in proportion to the parties' seats in the legislature. That committee would meet until they have a recommendation for the government. I do believe that you cannot force the government to follow the committee's recommendation but a government who chooses not to must publicly explain their decision.

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

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**QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE**

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

Q	You have mentioned that this information is on a website?
A	Yes, the address is <a href="http://www.valuevote.ca">www.valuevote.ca</a>
Q	What would ensure that the results from Part B and the discipline votes were made public?
A	It would be run in the same way as today, where all votes are officially recorded and the results are made public knowledge.
Q	How does this system differ to the current system?
A	The key thing that's different is the discipline vote. The check mark is the same as today but the discipline vote gives you a way to vote against a party without having to vote for another party which does not share your political philosophy.
Q	Can you do a check mark as well as a line?
A	Only one or the other.
Q	I would make a suggestion to include a 'none of the above' option.
A	If that's how you feel then you can just draw a line through them all.

**Comment:** There were no comments from the audience.

**SUBMISSION: YES**