

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

RICHMOND PUBLIC HEARING DATED
4 MAY 2004 AT THE VANCOUVER AIRPORT
MARRIOTT HOTEL, RICHMOND

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.

Lucien Saumur

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

I propose to explain how a system of preferential voting is most suited to a democracy and to demonstrate how it may easily be implemented using modern technology.

KEY THEMES

Lucien Saumur argued that the current system gives too much power to political parties and that a PR electoral system would also give more power to the parties rather the people.

He argued that democracy requires majority rule. While proponents of PR argue against majoritarianism, Mr Saumur felt that this is preferable to ‘minoritarianism.’

Mr Saumur explained that people are empowered by preferential voting, because a candidate can only be elected with the support of the majority of the voters.

However, he argued that preferential voting has been misused in STV systems. STV is fundamentally wrong because preferential voting and PR cannot be combined: PR views the electorate as distinct groups while preferential voting elects more conciliatory representatives who represent the majority of the electorate.

Mr Saumur also regarded preferential voting as being misused in the AV system because candidates can be elected who are not the first choice of any voters.

Mr Saumur proposed a new form of preferential voting for adoption in BC. This system would not require enlarging the current provincial ridings. Personal computers may be used to simplify the process of voting and the tallying of votes.

He also argued that we should reject any system that will give any more importance to political parties because the majority of voters are not members of political parties and do not identify strongly with a particular political party.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Lucien Saumur recommends the adoption of a unique preferential system for BC, as outlined in his submission.

Quote: “The best possible electoral system is one which allows voters to express themselves as thoroughly as possible. I believe that a preferential system is the best system to do this.”

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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

Q	In this system, is there any threshold or restriction for candidates?
A	There are no restrictions – two candidates from one party can run.
Q	How many candidates will you allow to enter the election in one riding?
A	There would be no limits.
Q	And if too many candidates contest a riding?
A	You don't have to rank every candidate. It is also possible to express that no other candidates are acceptable. This is an off-shoot of 'none of the above' option. However, you shouldn't be prevented from supporting any candidates. Instead, you can have 'none of some of the above' – you can say these are the ones that I like but the rest are unacceptable.
Q	Are 50 candidates in one riding too many for the voter?
A	No, because you only have to rank the ones you want and can dismiss nuisance candidates as unacceptable.
Q	Does this change the number of ridings?
A	No, this does not change the riding structure.

Comment from panel

There were no comments from the panel.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

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

Q	Is this the way that voters will vote, using the computer?
A	No, this [current slide in the presentation] is the tallying phase, let me show you the voting system. Voters vote using a computer screen. Voters only need to click on the candidates that they like and can indicate that 'the following candidates are not acceptable.'

Q	I'm concerned about the complicated counting system which will need to be shown to the voter after the ballot. Also, how would polling work with this complicated system?
A	Appendix B in my presentation demonstrates what voters would see at the end of the tally. You can see in the matrix which candidate has more than half the votes of every other one. I've listed 300 candidates in Appendix B and you come up with the results which you can see at the start of the Appendix. This would be easily published in the newspaper.
Q	Did you invent this precise system or has it been tested elsewhere?
A	Preferential voting is over 200 years old, but this precise system is my invention.

Comment: There were no comments from the audience.

SUBMISSION: YES

SUBMISSION ID# 0052