

# PRESENTATION SUMMARY

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SIDNEY/VICTORIA PUBLIC HEARING

DATED 15 MAY 2004

AT THE HOLIDAY INN VICTORIA

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.

# Patrick Thompson

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## DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

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A presentation opposing change to the current electoral system.

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## KEY THEMES

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Mr. Thompson expressed the view that it is not time to fix BC's political system. The presenter argued that the system is currently effective and should not be changed to cater to people who currently cannot be bothered to vote. PR will do nothing to resolve the difference between the parties, PR will not rectify the problems in our health system; it will appeal to the special interests and single issue groups. We need members elected on the basis of broad experience rather than narrow interests. Mr. Thompson discussed the need for more importance to be placed on governmental stability. To increase voter participation, polling should be banned as they provide an effective disincentive to vote. Obscuring potential results should stimulate turnout on election day.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Thompson recommended that the current FPTP system be retained.

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## QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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- Q      You mentioned that our current system is effective and stable, but how do you define that with wild swings between the right and the left in government?
- A      I believe that there is a lack in political maturity in British Columbia. No other province has this problem. We need to work through this and elect people closer to the center to moderate these violent swings.
- Q      If we were to keep SMP do you see any way of improving the system, perhaps by requiring candidates gain a majority?
- A      My own personal view is one person one vote. We owe it to our politicians for the effort they put in, it's not easy to win, and as has been witnessed lately for federal ridings it is not easy to get nominated, but we have to hope that we get the best person for the job.

- Q      How do you feel about wrong winners?
- A      I don't see it as a problem.
- Q      FPTP encourages a two-party system, what would you say to voters who want to see candidates from other parties?
- A      We've had more than two parties in the past, and the fringe parties have seen the light and made coalitions. We have a coalition governing BC right now made up of two parties of the right. The single issue parties should be taken care of by the larger parties. They have to decide that they have to get together, as they are currently doing at the federal level.
- Q      There is a LCC argument that the current system encourages regionalism, do you see that as a problem?
- A      No, I don't see it as a danger. It is a problem that slowly works its way out over time. People have to get their viewpoints into a centrally dominated arena and eventually form larger parties.

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

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- Q      How can you say that the existing system is fair when we have just heard the negatives, there are not many voices claiming to represent the people, how do we change this undemocratic system?
- A      I believe this system has served us well for more than 100 years now and there are global forces that govern our markets that are beyond our control.
- Q      You made a reference to the immaturity of the voting public, I understand most European countries have a form of PR, can you explain how these countries are

immature?

A

I will leave that up to the panel, but these other countries don't have the big elephant of the US of A next door and that has a big influence. The prospect of an amalgamation of the west coast of North America looms large in these discussions.

Comment

I appreciated the point you made about the polls prior to elections.