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## ***EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE***

### **A brief Brief to the Citizens' Assembly On the desirability of reducing the size of constituencies on the basis of size, population, spread and distance from the Legislature, in the interest of fair representation**

Having expressed my support for a preferential ballot system for reasons given above, I wish to point out a serious weakness in any system that does not take into account the geography, the distance from the Capital, the number of communities and the size, concentration or spread of the population in each Constituency.

Our present system denies equal or fair representation to the people who live in rural and sparsely populated constituencies.

A classic and simple example would be to compare the Victoria/Beacon Hill Constituency in Victoria with the North Island Constituency, which covers the northern half of Vancouver Island and its off-shore islands.

In Victoria/Beacon Hill, a candidate for election can rent one office, advertise in one local paper, communicate with all constituents by local phone calls (no long distance charges), hire one central meeting hall for public meetings and walk around the constituency meeting his constituents. He has direct and immediate contact with his constituents and they with him.

And, importantly, when the candidate is elected, he or she can walk to the Legislature and devote the maximum amount of time serving the needs of his or her constituents.

On the other hand, a Candidate wishing to represent North Island must have multiple offices around the vast Constituency, as there are nine Municipalities, two Regional Districts, (Mount Waddington & Comox) ten unincorporated communities and eight First Nations communities.

Meetings with constituents require the hiring of a meeting hall in each community and extremely complicated travel schedules (and ferry schedules) to attempt the challenge of meeting a large cross-section of constituents face to face.

Newspaper advertising involves different local newspapers and a variety of Radio and Television stations have to be contended with, as well. Unlike a city constituency, telephone communication involves the cost and frustration of long distance phone calls.

Another major challenge for the rural candidate is the obligation to meet and become familiar with a large number of Municipal councils, Regional District Boards, Regional Hospital Boards, School District Boards and Chambers of Commerce, Labour Councils and Union locals.

Most rural candidates spend two days a week travelling back and forth to Victoria, which means that about 30% of their time is spent travelling.

The rural candidate must also be well-informed on a large number of resource and resource processing industries, such as Forestry, Mining, Agriculture, Fishing and Wilderness Tourism.

In summary, there is no comparison between the task of representing an urban riding, and a rural riding that is a distance from the Capital and whose population is spread out around many different communities.

For the foregoing reasons, in the interest of fair representation, I respectfully suggest that our Citizens' Assembly recommend the redrawing of all Constituencies across the province, reducing the size of the rural constituencies using factors that recognise;

- 1) The distance from the Capital
- 2) The sheer geographical spread of rural constituencies
- 3) The number of communities in each.

The choice of a new voting system for our province is a major first step in ensuring that the successful candidate is truly representative of his or her constituents.

But true, full and fair representation will not happen until constituency sizes are modified to reflect the barriers of distance, size, population and spread.

As a Candidate in the North Island riding in three provincial elections, I know whereof I speak.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gerry Furney', with a stylized flourish underneath.

Gerry Furney  
Mayor