PRESENTATION SUMMARY

SURREY PUBLIC HEARING
DATED 31 MAY 2004
AT THE SHERATON GUILDFORD HOTEL

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.

Robert Evans

Reason over rhetoric. Eliminating flashy "spam" ads and replacing them with substance.

KEY THEMES

Mr. Evans discussed the methods by which different citizens arrive at their vote choice. The presenter discussed the problematic nature of information stemming primarily from the very political parties that are attempting to get elected. Mr. Evans argued that people rarely have the time to sift through the rhetoric and garner accurate information about candidates. The presenter argued that politicians make empty promises in the knowledge that the majority of voters do not have the time to examine the facts. Mr. Evans cautioned against a radical referendum proposal as the attendees of the public hearings are likely to be unrepresentative of the broader will of the community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Evans recommended that members of the public be empowered to make an informed political decision via:
1. The provision of a document of standardized questions asked to each candidate in their riding. Voters are then able to compare answers.
2. The elimination of public campaign advertising.
3. The dedication of state television and radio for debate and presentations. Equal time would be given to each riding. A copy of each riding's debate would also be made available to each voter via internet or video/DVD for those unable to watch the debate live.
4. The use of two elections, one elimination round and a second round for the top two remaining candidates (majority run-off).

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

Q   What system would you like to see?

A   The most simple and realistic system would be the documentation of information with pie-charts, 60% of people would be willing to vote for that.

Q   How do you prevent people from towing the party line?

A   The only way that that could be accomplished is if one of the parties was to legislate for that. The best

we can do is to get parties to provide a comprehensive party platform so that we can decide who is trustworthy and who we think is lying.

Q   Who would select the questions that would appear on the document?

A   I believe that that should be left to an independent non-partisan body. They should be held up to the same standards that scientific questions are held up to.

Q   We are concerned with the way that votes are translated into seats, what system do you prefer?

A   I think that we have a very good system. I don't think that we need to change the system just the way that people operate within it.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q   Wouldn't this information be incomplete without questions regarding the values and legislation that they might support?

A   Absolutely.

Q   What stops parties from telling their candidates what answers to provide? Isn't it likely that their answers would all be the same?

A   Nothing stops parties from directing their candidates to answer the questions in a certain way, but that gives independents the opportunities to use their brains and differentiate themselves.