

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

TERRACE PUBLIC HEARING
DATED 8 JUNE 2004
AT THE COAST INN OF THE WEST

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.

Reg Stowell

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

I will expand upon the presentation I previously submitted to the Assembly.

KEY THEMES

Mr. Stowell discussed the failure of FPTP to provide representative government over the past forty years. The presenter discussed the problem of wrong winners and exaggerated majorities and stressed the need for reform. Mr. Stowell argued against MMP on the grounds that it creates two classes of members: those elected by the people and those appointed by the party. While Mr. Stowell acknowledged that proportionality of parties is important it should not be the only consideration, and may lead to a fractured electorate. The presenter stressed the need for parties to promote the increased representation of women and First Nations people. Mr. Stowell argued that MMP would further reduce the chances for independents to be elected.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Stowell recommended the introduction of a preferential ballot with the alternative vote in order to address the issue of voter disenfranchisement. According to the presenter, the alternative vote system ensures that all elected members represent a riding and further that no citizen's vote is discarded. Mr. Stowell stated that the primary benefit of such a system lies in the fact that it is a candidate based system that gives maximum choice to voters. The presenter argued that STV constitutes the most appropriate system for the urban areas of BC. However, in rural areas the implementation of STV would make electorates unreasonably large. The presenter contended that the introduction of a preferential ballot would not be too complex for voters, as evidenced by its use in BC in the 1950s.

In addition, Mr. Stowell recommended the direct election of the premier in order to separate the executive and legislative branches of government in order to temper the dominance of the executive over the legislature.

Quote: FPTP has consistently failed to provide British Columbians with representative government. MMP would be an improvement, but preferential balloting is the best alternative, at least outside of the south-west corner of the province.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

Q Would you consider a mixed system in which the method of electing members varies between urban and rural areas?

A Yes I would. I'm reluctant to tell the people of Vancouver what system is best, but if I was living in Vancouver I would think that STV would be the best system but the districts just get too large outside of the urban areas. So I would support STV in urban areas and the alternative vote in rural areas.