

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

VANCOUVER PUBLIC HEARING JUNE 12,
2004 AT MARRIOTT PINNACLE 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.

Reimar Kroecher

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

To argue for change to proportional representation and to citizen-initiated referenda.

KEY THEMES

The wasted vote syndrome has another dimension to it: not only does it not make any sense to vote for an NDP candidate in Chilliwack, but likewise it doesn't make any sense for a conservative voter to vote in North Vancouver, because the incumbent candidate will get elected. So why bother voting?

Examine the scenario of a hypothetical country, with 10 ridings, 1000 voters, assuming that everyone votes. In 6 ridings, party A gets 55 votes, and party B gets 45 votes. In 4 ridings Party A gets 10 votes and B 90 votes, Party A elects 6 MLAs and party B elects 4 MLAs. Party A has a majority in House. Party A wins 370 total votes, B 630 votes. Party A will form the majority in government. That seems undemocratic. This can happen only in a two party system.

My next example is in a 3 party system. 10 ridings, 100 voters in each riding. 60% of voters in each riding vote, so 60 voters in each riding. The total number of votes for the parties: A 170 votes, B 240, C 190 votes. Party A forms the majority government because it won many ridings. Party C which gets 190 votes do not elect a single member, no representation in parliament at all. So, the smallest number of votes can form a majority government. Only 17% of eligible votes. Party A gets 28% of votes cast. In many countries it is a dictatorship. There is something wrong with the system where so many people vote and get no representative in parliament.

Now PR is a voting system whereby each party gets the % of MLAs according to the vote. In the previous example, parties would elect many candidates. There are many models, and PR will ensure that no party would get a majority without a majority of the vote.

RECOMMENDATIONS

List proportional system.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q With this system, you are proposing a mixed system, how does this system determine the PM?

A I suppose that the party that gets the most no of seats would get the first choice, and if a coalition government the two parties would have to vote who will be the PM and cabinet. The major input is from the party with the most MLAs.

Q You are also for a citizen-initiated referendum?

A This is not part of the mandate.

Q You propose an open list for the second MLA, do you anticipate any problem in educating the people to vote for this system, to be able to select another choice?

A I am more inclined to think that the party selects lists.

Q Should lists be prioritized?

A I think the parties and the voters would know that some of the members of the at large lists would end up in the legislature. I don't see this as a crucial detail, no matter how the list is designed, it is a huge advantage over the FPTP system.