

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.

Sam Sullivan

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

Vancouver City Councilor Sam Sullivan will present findings on his ten year research on civic electoral reform issues.

KEY THEMES

As a Vancouver City Councilor, I am jealous of your process. Ever since Socrates was sentenced to death, the democratic ideals have not been achieved. There is a deliberative will and the non-deliberative will. Recall your first day on the Citizens' Assembly, I suspect that your vote would be very different from your vote now.

We have a problem, one citizen with two wills, one with a true one and the other is the false will. The deliberate will is the only true will and it can only be determined by going through a deliberative process. Your ideas are changing from week to week. I believe you should abandon the enterprise of faithfully and accurately translating the non deliberate and false will of the uninformed public.

The system that I am asking you to consider consists of requiring of all politicians to submit their credentials and proposals to a Citizens' Assembly that would scrutinize and evaluate the politicians and the parties. Elections and campaigns would be organized as always. But when citizens arrived at the booth, they would provide the rationale of the Assembly on the politicians, after the Assembly went through the deliberative process. Every election forces the people to express our non-deliberate will.

I believe that an at-large system of government would be preferable, the candidate lists would be prioritized by the Citizens' Assembly, not by the parties, the evaluation of the Assembly would be a definite recommendation on the make up of the government, the size of the legislature would be reduced, and an environment would be created for the creation of professional, efficient voter service. The impact of this proposal on the government of BC would be profound. Gone would be the war between spin doctors who are so adept at manipulating the opinion of electors, then we would achieve a society where the children of Socrates die of old age and where we would achieve the idea of true democracy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Change to a citizens' assembly type process.

“The system that I am asking you to consider consists of requiring of all politicians to submit their credentials and proposals to a citizens’ assembly that would scrutinize and evaluate the politicians and the parties.”

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

Q These include a mix of questions from the panel and the public. Are you suggesting that the assembly be permanent?

A No, the assembly would be constituted prior to each election.

Q Thank you so much for this presentation, we recognize the limitations of the mandate of this assembly, you said at one point that all of these good things could happen with many systems. Do some systems open up more doors, like the Irish system?

A I am not sure about the technical aspects that I am suggesting, my main point is that the deliberative process of this CA is very good, any system could benefit from such a process, the deliberative part of the process would override all the negative parts of an electoral process.

Q What do you mean by true and false wills?

A When people on the assembly at the beginning would have voted one way, now after hearings and deliberation, based on reflection, knowledge and deliberation, the members would vote differently now.

Q Isn't the CA you are proposing, let's say a year before the election, a fixed election date is positive, the idea of a CA to inform the public about politicians. Isn't this CA embodied by the media? Don't they decide who they support a party over another??

A I don't think the media is a very deliberative body, I am not impressed with what is happening right now in this election.

Q Would you not consider that the Vancouver System in the city is bad?

A The system in the city is not deliberative.

Q How would the CA be able to force the media express the views of the CA?

A People could vote the way they wanted, the CA I hope they would come to a consensus but if not they could present their dissenting views.

Q How does what you propose fit in with the assembly's mandate? And don't you take the onus of deliberation away from citizens and give it to a body?

A We know that a random sample of citizens will tell us what they believe, but it is not necessary to have every citizen deliberate like that, we could have a few chosen ones who will do that.