

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

VERNON PUBLIC HEARING
DATED 21 JUNE 2004
AT THE PRESTIGE INN VERNON SALON

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.

David Jackson

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

Areas of the existing electoral model which are not functioning and need to be addressed in any proposed reforms.

KEY THEMES

Mr. Jackson offered his support for the introduction of proportional representation. The presenter discussed his experience witnessing the deterioration of democracy in Canada. Mr. Jackson urged the Citizens' Assembly to recommend electoral change. According to Mr. Jackson, the model of democracy has been transformed from one that is small and local to one that is large and global, and has effectively become a travesty of the democratic ideal. The presenter discussed the negativity he encountered on the part of citizens toward the electoral system during his experience as an advocate for the Proportional Representation Initiative of 2002. Mr. Jackson argued that there is a need to change the mindset surrounding the political system. The presenter stated that the current system is open to exploitation by special interest groups. According to Mr. Jackson, electoral reform is needed to return power to individuals to allow citizens to gain their rightful representation in the legislature.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The presenter recommended the adoption of PR (MMP) in order to give people a reason to vote as every ballot cast has an outcome by way of representation. Furthermore, Mr. Jackson argued that the introduction of PR would moderate the wild swings in policy that have become characteristic of BC and would create an environment of stability and continuity. Mr. Jackson stated that the key to a good electoral system lies in its ability to encourage good people to stand for election; a system which encourages us to abandon the combative mindset fostered by the current system. According to Mr. Jackson, PR provides for the emergence of such a system. Mr. Jackson went on to note that democracy is a continually evolving process that is constantly in need of protection. To fulfill this requirement the presenter advocated the periodic reestablishment of the Citizens' Assembly, possibly every 15 years. Finally, Mr. Jackson supported the introduction of split terms, possibly with the election of one quarter of the legislature annually, in order to keep the government responsive to the will of the electorate.

Quote: We need to move towards consensus and synergy where we work together and not against each other.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

Q How do you square the circle of proportionality and stability?

A We need to attract the type of person whose mindset is compatible with consensus and conciliation; a focus on the greater good rather than personal interest. This is where I feel this system has completely failed us. We have to encourage people to make them feel that their vote is worthwhile and we can only do that if they feel that their vote has tangible value.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Comment The American Senate is organized with split terms with a third elected every two years and that may be a suggestion to consider; longer terms, but with some turnover every second year.