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.

Dirk Pereboom

A presentation in support of STV.

Mr. Pereboom discussed the ability of FPTP to create exaggerated majorities, lead to wild swings in policies, and foster regionalism. The presenter argued that in our current federal election with four parties vying for seats, it may only take 25% of the vote plus one to get a candidate elected, effectively disenfranchising around 75% of the electorate. Mr. Pereboom noted that while using the province as a single district would ensure true proportional representation, he felt that the sacrifice of local representation would be too great as BC is comprised of many distinct regions with particular interests and goals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The presenter recommended the introduction of STV. Under this system, ridings with similar communities of interest may be amalgamated. Mr. Pereboom proposed a system comprised of 16 ridings ranging from two to seven members. In the case where five or six existing ridings are combined to form a single unit, the same total number of seats would represent the area. The difference, according to Mr. Pereboom, is that the use of STV increases the likelihood that the full range of opinions in the electorate will be represented. Under this system the party could nominate the same number of representatives as the number of parliamentary seats assigned to the enlarged riding. Each regional riding would still be determined according to population. Candidates could be ranked in alphabetical order or according to a party listing. The minimum number of candidates to be ranked would be one in order to prevent spoiled ballots.

> *Quote: I am aware that there are many forms and degrees of proportional representation in many countries around the world. Each form should be specifically adapted to meet the needs of a particular country or region but all proportional voting systems allow for varying degrees of representation to voice an enlarged diversity of opinions.*

Q   Ireland uses STV and my concern with it is that when you allow members of the same party to run against each other campaigning becomes very clientelistic as you must ensure that constituents prefer you to your party counterpart. Are you concerned that it will not allow for greater diversity in representation, but rather the creation of party blocs?

A   In a preferential voting system, because you are able to number your choices you don't have to vote according to party, you can vote for people because you support their platforms. It is a positive vote and it enables the reflection of what more of the constituency wants.

Q   Would each party have six candidates on the ballot if it was a six member riding, and would this not lead to excessive numbers of candidates on the ballot?

A   Yes they can. But if they only want to field two then they can do so, but six would be the maximum in a six member riding. In addition, independents would be able to be elected via this system. The problem of having large numbers of candidates on the ballots may arise and that is one of the drawbacks, however, I think that this is a minor fault in comparison to not being able to vote for individuals.