



CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY
ON ELECTORAL REFORM

Record of Proceedings of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform November 27-28, 2004

In attendance: J. Blaney, Chair
157 Assembly members
11 staff
10 facilitators
10 notetakers
20 observers
12-15 media

Absent: C. Fader
V. Gowing

Recording secretary: L. Perra

Saturday, November 27, 2004

Plenary AM Session

Thea Melvin and Amanda Medley led the members of the Citizens' Assembly (the "Assembly") in the singing of the national anthem.

The Chair welcomed the Premier, the Right Honourable Gordon Campbell and Attorney General Geoff Plant. In a brief address, the Chair commended the Premier for having created the Citizens' Assembly and expressed appreciation for the support and independence the Assembly was accorded by the government.

The Premier thanked the Chair and the Assembly members, on behalf of the people of British Columbia, for their pioneering work, their obvious commitment to the task they were given and for their commitment to the process.

Following introductions, the Premier presented a framed certificate to each Assembly member and he and the Attorney General congratulated and thanked them for their work.

The Assembly and the official guests moved to the Atrium for photographs. This was followed by a coffee break with the Premier and the Attorney General.

- Final Report

The general layout of the final report was projected on the screen for member's to view. The following comments were made:

- Third bullet on "Other Issues" page, to include "and issues related to parliamentary reform";
- Concern was expressed with the use of the term "democratic deficit";

- Several members suggested that a specific mention of First Nations be included but not include them with minority groups;
- Several members suggested that the term “groups” not be used but simply use the term “minorities” to describe minority groups;
- Differing views were expressed regarding the ballot - some wanted a vertical arrangement while others preferred the vertical approach; some wanted candidates listed under party names whereas others preferred list candidates first followed by party name; a few people suggested including numbers on the ballot to reflect preferences; a suggestion was made to move “independent” up to confirm the randomness of party groups.

Significant discussions ensued on the use of proportionality in the heading “Fair Electoral Results.” Many members indicated that the absence of proportionality was a problem for members when speaking to the public. By a show of hands, the Assembly agreed that the heading “Fair Electoral Results” be amended to “Fair Electoral Results through Proportionality”.

Several members provided editorial comments to Leo Perra for review.

Upon conclusion of discussion, the Chair advised the Assembly that the Final Report would be delivered to all households in mid January.

- **Referendum Question**

A revised referendum question was presented to the Assembly:

“Do you agree that British Columbians change to BC-STV as recommended by the Citizens’ Assembly on Electoral Reform? Yes/No”

Significant discussions ensued regarding the use of the term “change.” The Assembly agreed by an electronic vote to keep the word change in the question.

- **Counting System**

Discussion took place over the use of “categories” for the size of districts. It was agreed by consensus that the previous decision of the Assembly to keep it general but emphasize the importance of larger district magnitudes be kept. There was brief discussion of the two papers: Surplus Surpluses (Shoni Field) and The Recommended BC-STV Electoral System (Campbell Sharman). The Assembly agreed by consensus that paper on The Recommended BC-STV Electoral System reflected the opinion of the Assembly.

- **Other Issues**

It was suggested that the issue of access in remote areas to MLAs be independent of the electoral model in use and that the Technical Report should reflect this opinion. The draft document referred to “recommendations” but the Assembly had only one recommendation to make, so this should be corrected. Another

point was raised regarding the improper placement of women within minority groups. It was agreed by consensus that the “Other Issues” in the Technical Report reflected the Assembly’s position.

Plenary Presentation - Communicating the Assembly’s Message - M. Jacobson

Following the presentation, the Assembly broke into discussion groups and reconvened in the late afternoon.

Plenary Session - Feedback from Discussion Groups

Some of the ideas from the discussion groups on communicating the Assembly’s message included:

- Using stacks of coins to illustrate the transfer of votes between candidates
- Results reflect votes cast
- More choice in the end
- It counts that you vote because your vote counts
- It’s better than what we got
- Discuss results of last two elections- refer audience to graphic illustration of BC-STV
- Determine how audience feels about politics and use this to guide discussion
- Raise the question about the referendum and then talk about the issue
- Business-size cards with STV on it and information on the back of the card
- Need to be confident and excited when speaking to people
- Video on counting process
- Keep talking about values

Marilyn thanked everyone for their ideas and suggestions.

Sunday AM Plenary, November 28, 2004

There being no further business, the Chair invited members to say a few closing remarks.

Words of appreciation and thanks were expressed by R.B., D. Byford, B. Banister, S. Todd, W. Chelle, F. Myers, A. Medley, A. McKinnon, M. Jarbek, W. Schulz, T. Dagert, R. Jones, S. De Luna and S. MacDermott.

The Chair reciprocated with words of appreciation to members of the Assembly who have made extra efforts over the course of the year. He invited the members to give themselves a deserved round of applause.

Rev. R. Hall provided a closing benediction.

R.B. moved to adjourn the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform.

The Assembly adjourned at 11:10 am.