



CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY  
ON ELECTORAL REFORM

## **Record of Proceedings of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform September 11-12, 2004**

In attendance: J. Blaney, Chair  
152 Assembly members  
10 staff  
11 facilitators  
10 notetakers  
9 guest presenters  
40-45 observers  
3-4 media

On leave: S. Williams  
G. Mackinnon

Absent: P. Barakat  
J. Chapman  
C. Fader  
I. Fleming  
V. Gowing  
D. Waller

Recording secretary: L. Perra

### **Saturday, September 11, 2004 (AM Plenary Session)**

W. Wong led the Assembly in the singing of the National Anthem.

The Chair asked for a moment of silence in respect of the 9/11 victims. The Chair recognized:

- Gladys Brown for her silver medal in the senior's competition.
- Special and regular guests who were in attendance.
- Two members who were on leave owing to family illnesses.
- Continuing full membership of the Citizens' Assembly.

#### **1. Report from the Selection Committee on Plenary Presentations**

Anna Rankin, Committee Chair, reported that the Committee reviewed 70-plus applicants and recommendations from Assembly members. The Committee based its choice on the criteria established by the Citizens' Assembly. These included quality, mandate, balance and representativeness, and merit. At the end of a one-day meeting, the Committee (comprising ten members) selected the nine presenters to make their presentations.

## 2. Plenary Presentations

### - **Ian McKinnon, Electoral Reform – Taking into account political parties and governance issues**

Questions on the following themes were raised:

- Westminster system and confidence votes
- Central role of parties
- Preferential vote or MMP vote
- Models that serve interests of politicians
- Number of elections under different models
- Open lists versus closed lists

### - **Bruce Hallsor, Fair Vote Canada**

Questions on the following themes were raised:

- Voter choice under STV
- MMP's inclusion of SMP and closed lists, examples of the worst of systems
- Gender equity under different models
- Response of citizens if no change is recommended
- Proportional models and unstable governments
- Equality of votes and size of electoral districts
- Voter thresholds
- Reconciling the difference between local representation and proportionality
- Making coalition building open and transparent

### - **Tom Hoenisch, MMP System**

Questions on the following themes were raised:

- Existence of small parties under proportional systems
- Advantage of proportional MMP model to small districts
- Do thresholds result in wasted votes for those who do not pass threshold?
- Closed list and voter choice
- Support for change regardless of model
- Role and accountability of at-large MLAs
- Position on STV
- Creation of closed list through an open process
- Two types of MLAs
- Strategic voting and vote splitting
- Closed lists and voter choice
- AV for constituency seats

- **Katherine Gordon, MMP System**

Questions on the following themes were raised:

- Two types of MLAs
- MMP and adversarial politics/governance
- AV for constituency seats
- Practical implications of demographic representation in list candidates
- Role of committees in a MMP system
- Implications of district size under MMP

- **Julian West, STV+Circuits (update)**

Questions on the following themes were raised:

- Complexity of model
- Producing “wrong winners” under STV
- Selection of circuit MLAs
- Community source of candidates/MLAs
- Can STV permit voters to support a party versus a candidate
- Implications for district size
- Do STV MLAs focus more on local issues?

- **Nick Loenen, Preferential Plus: A new effective made-in-BC voting system to elect MLAs**

Questions on the following themes were raised:

- Downsides of proposed models
- Implications for parties
- Regional interests versus provincial interests
- Cheap/safe seats
- AV seats and implications for proportionality

- **Chris Morey, Rural Perspectives**

Questions on the following themes were raised:

- Local representation versus party discipline
- Change and implications for local representation and district size
- Comfort with two-tiered systems

- **Arpal Dosanjh, Majoritarian Preferential Voting: The wisest option**

Questions on the following themes were raised:

- Implications for voter turnout
- Implications for smaller parties
- Implications for first vote leading candidates
- Implications on party behaviour
- Best model or saleable model
- Likelihood of further change after this process
- Impact of mandate on selection of models

- **Jim Nielsen, Current System**

Questions on the following themes were raised:

- Changing parties and implications for winning or losing subsequent election
- Actual votes suggest citizens' interest in minority options
- Party size need to be considered mainstream, minority, extreme party
- Would no change disenfranchise citizens?
- SMP and implications for opposition party

The Chair, on behalf of the Citizens' Assembly thanked the presenters for their excellent presentations.

**3. Plenary presentation on submissions**

C. Sharman provided a brief overview on the submission index that had been circulated to members. He reported that over 400 hundred submissions had been received in the week leading up to the deadline of August 13. The index will be on the website for those with internet access, and searches can be undertaken under any of the key categories and fields.

Three members volunteered to make a presentation on their review of submissions.

- Ray Jones brought forward some key themes he had found in submissions:
  - Role of Citizens' Assembly
  - Discontent with current system
  - Voter apathy and possible solutions
  - Issues relevant to electoral reform
  - Opposition to STV

- Wendy Bergerud brought forth the following key themes:
  - Approval voting
  - Gender Equity
  - MMP Variants
  
- Wilf Chelle brought forth the following key themes:
  - “Divine right” of rulers
  - Strength and diversity of citizens
  - Importance of provincial regions and need for representation
  - Importance of effective MLAs
  - Accountability of government to legislature

Following the presentations, the Chair invited comments and observations from Assembly members.

- Liane Ashley read out a few “gems” extracted from the submissions by Brooke Bannister.
  
- Several members reported on their efforts to involve First Nations members in the hearings and submissions process.
  
- A member suggested that the Final Report express sincere appreciation to the submitters for their time and effort in preparing and forwarding their submissions.

The Chair thanked the members for their review of submissions.

#### **4. Evening closed plenary session**

The Chair invited Jerry Stanger, Assembly member, to chair and open the meeting of the Assembly. Some issues raised include:

- Absence of First Nations involvement
- Small number of submissions advocating “no change”
- Quality of plenary presentations
- Lack of interest from the school system
- Gender equity
- Coalition government(s) between elections within a Westminster system
- Affirmative action to address needs of under represented groups
- Candidate selection process and role of the Citizens' Assembly in same
- Setting of boundaries and using current boundaries for other jurisdictions
- Adversarial practices within different electoral models
- District magnitude and proportionality
- Complexity of selected model and implications for referendum
- Selecting the best model for British Columbia consistent with mandate

## **Sunday, September 12, 2004 (AM Plenary Session)**

The Chair invited K. Carty to make his presentation.

### **1. Presentation: Starting to Decide – K. Carty**

K. Carty provided an overview of the key elements that the Citizens' Assembly must consider as it moves along its decision tree. A set of options/values was provided for discussion and ranking by the discussion groups.

Questions to be considered by the groups include:

- Recall of a list member
- Reducing party discipline through electoral system
- Financial implications of electoral system
- Implication of ties under different electoral models
- Recounts under different electoral models

### **2. Reports to the Plenary Session**

A representative from each group was asked to report on the choices made and what their group saw as the three most important, and one least important, features of BC politics.

Group 1, Rick Dignard:

- Local representation
- Increased proportionality
- Voter choice
- Least important – Single party majority government

Group 2, Jack MacDonald:

- Seats won mirror votes won
- Local representation
- Voter choice
- Lessen party discipline
- More constructive civilized politics
- Least important - Single party majority government

Group 3, Cherie Mostrovich:

- Voter choice
- Seats mirror votes
- Local representation
- (Minority option - social and cultural representation in legislature)
- Least important - Single party majority government

Group 4, C.J Thiessen:

- Voter choice
- Local representation
- Proportionality
- (Minority - social and cultural representation in the legislature)
- Least important - Single party majority government

Group 5, Rob Jones:

- Seats mirror votes
- Local representation
- Multi-party competition
- Least important - Single party majority government

Group 6, Adina Irimescu:

- Seats mirror votes
- Voter choice
- Multi-party competition
- Local representation
- District size
- Least important - Single party majority government

Group 7, Derek Harder:

- Local representation
- Voter choice
- Seats mirror votes
- Least importance - Single party majority government

Group 8, Mary Jarbek

- Seats mirror votes
- Socially and culturally representative legislature
- MLAs represent local constituency
- System should encourage multi-party competition
- Least important – Single party majority government
- Simplicity in ballot

Group 9, Ray Spaxman:

- Local representation
- Seats mirror votes
- Candidate and party representation
- (important, social and cultural representation)
- Least important - Single party majority government

Group 10, Wendy Bergerud:

- Candidate and party votes
- Seats mirror votes
- Multi-party competition
- Least important – Single party majority government

Observations include:

- Addition of notetakers was a good idea
- Large groups should be reduced or more time provided for discussions
- Several announcements of interest were given
- First Nations issues could be included under other considerations section
- Some of the value statements included double meanings such as the one on voter choice

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 12:25 pm.