

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

SECHELT PUBLIC HEARING DATED
5 JUNE 2004 AT THE DRIFTWOOD INN

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.

Arnett Tuffs

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

It will be on proportional representation.

KEY THEMES

Arnett Tuffs recounted some significant events in the British Columbia's electoral history, including the extension of the franchise to women, and the development of political parties. He explained that even though the current electoral system enables voters to have direct contact with a local representative, it also produces considerable disproportionality in the translation of votes into seats, with governments often receiving a majority of seats in the legislature without a majority of the popular votes. He argued that the current electoral system does not meet the economic, social, cultural and political needs of today's multi-party society. Mr Tuffs opposed the introduction of a pure-PR system because it lacks direct access to an accountable, locally elected representative.

He proposed introducing a New Zealand-style MMP electoral system in British Columbia, in order to combine proportionality and local representation. Mr Tuffs advised increasing the number of MLAs in the legislature from 79 to 90, with 45 constituencies and 45 MLAs elected via party lists, and using the Sainte-Lague formula for the allocation of list seats. He also recommended dividing the provinces into five electoral regions: the Lower Mainland, City of Vancouver, Vancouver Island-South Coast, Southern Interior-Okanagan East, and Northern-Interior-North-West-North-East, with the 45 constituency seats being allocated between the five regions on the basis of geography, remoteness, population, diversity, local representation needs and urban-rural interests. In this way, each region may not necessarily have constituencies allocated solely on the basis of population, but boundaries would also consider the needs of regional people for greater representation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Arnett Tuffs recommended the introduction of MMP in British Columbia.

Quote: "The combination of the First-Past-the-Post voting system with a Mixed Member Proportional electoral system brings together democratic accountable constituency representation values with a fair proportional representation electoral system that will strengthen our parliamentary democracy."

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

There were two members of the panel who sought clarification on elements of the presentation.

Q	When you have one ballot with two votes, on the second vote are you think of having a single vote or a ranking system?
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A	A ranking system.
Q	You mentioned the importance of equalizing the vote, but you also mentioned increasing the number of MLAs in the Interior and the North while reducing the number of MLAs representing the cities. Doesn't this mean that some MLAs would need to win more votes than others to be represented?
A	The equalization process would occur through the party list.
Q	In such a system there are two kinds of MLAs: list MLAs and constituency MLAs. How do these two types of MLAs relate to the voter?
A	In New Zealand there were members of parliament in each of the ridings.

Comment from panel: There were no comments from the panel.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

There were no questions or comments from the audience.

SUBMISSION: NO