

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

SMITHERS PUBLIC HEARING
DATED 7 JUNE 2004
AT THE HUDSON BAY LODGE

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.

George Koopmans

Christian Heritage Party

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

A presentation outlining the shortcomings of the current FPTP system and recommending the adoption of a preferential ballot under the alternative vote.

KEY THEMES

Mr. Koopmans discussed a number of perceived shortcomings of the current FPTP system including: its inability to allow the reflection of the diversity of society; the exclusion of minor parties; the promotion of adversarial politics; the domination of political parties leading to a lack of accountability; and the tendency of the system to discourage voter participation in the political process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Koopmans recommended the adoption of a preferential ballot under the alternative vote system. According to Mr. Koopmans, this system is more desirable than any of the proportional systems as local representation, particularly in rural ridings of the north, is maintained under the current boundaries. Mr. Koopmans contended that such a system would moderate the adversarial nature of politics, lead to increased accountability, and stimulate voter participation as every vote will count. The presenter stressed the view that any proposed change should not lead to a loss of representation in northern ridings. Mr. Koopmans argued that a need exists to support local MLAs in large ridings, possibly via the provision of travel allowances or increased office staffing.

Quote: As a Citizens' Assembly, you have the unique opportunity to provide our BC Government with a "made in BC" solution that will keep representation in the North as is and provide our Beautiful BC with a system that will benefit all political parties and all citizens who will then know "my vote counts"..

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

- Q You note that we need a system that will represent the views of the whole province; can I take from this that you support the introduction of system of proportionality?
- A Of the proportional systems, I would prefer STV, where the candidates would be ranked and choices would be given to the voters.