

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

BURNABY PUBLIC HEARING DATED
5 MAY 2004 AT HOLIDAY INN METROTOWN

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.

Leslie Brown

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

Presentation in support of a move towards proportional representation.

KEY THEMES

The presenter addressed the deficiencies of the current FPTP system, particularly wasted votes, artificial majorities, disproportionality, and the strategic casting of ballots.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The presenter recommended a change to a PR system in order to encourage voter participation by making every vote count. Mr. Brown proposed a single vote system in which votes cast for losing candidates at the constituency level are transferred to party pools from which list members are elected.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

- Q You indicated that votes cast for losing candidates are transferred to party pools, are the votes of the winning candidates excluded?
- A Yes. If you're candidate has been elected then you have gained representation. We are looking for a system where everyone's votes count.
- Q Are you concerned about weak candidates being protected by the party list, so-called zombie candidates?
- A If they are weak candidates then they are not likely to get the votes to be elected.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

- Q The structural weakness of our electoral system is more than just the process of election itself, but it is in the function of the legislature during its term of office as a result of party discipline. You, and the previous speakers, have not addressed the issues of

MLA accountability to the constituency. Even with PR how is that going to eliminate this inequity of parachuting candidates into a riding, the leaders dictating which candidate will represent them? During the tenure of the elected representative, what makes sure they are accountable to the constituents and not the party?

A These appear parliamentary or party matters and these are issues outside the remit of the Assembly. I think we need to address the question of electoral reform here.

Q PR quite often leads to minority government. There is nothing that improves accountability as well as the fear of being turfed out, so when you say that the parliamentary process is outside the mandate, that may be true, but shouldn't the downstream effects be considered?

A I certainly believe in consensus politics. I'm in favour of minority governments and the desirable form of policy making that might produce.

Q If you have a list member, surely they will be given a job by the party?

A The election of list members may enable the election of women or minorities and may save important members of the party from having to fight a targeted constituency battle.