

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.

Iain Macanulty

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

A brief look at the pros and cons of the single transferable vote (STV) system, using Burnaby as an example.

KEY THEMES

The presenter expressed concern regarding the power of parties under the current system and explored the influence of parties under three proportional electoral systems: PR list, MMP, and STV.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The presenter recommended a change to STV in order to weaken party discipline in the legislature and increase the need for MLA's to pay attention to the views of their constituents. Furthermore, STV negates the problem of having two classes of members in the legislature.

Quote: The ability to elect Independents is a measure of how effective the electoral system is at overcoming the power of parties.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

- Q You suggested two faults with the MMP system, two types of members and the strengthening of party power with lists. Does this exist with open lists?
- A The power of the party is lessened with an open list.
- Q What proportion of list seats would you recommend?
- A I'm not sure. Germany has a 50-50 split, but it would depend on how large you want the constituencies to become.

Q You indicated when talking about STV that there should be a smaller number in rural ridings, did you mean the number of MLAs or voters?

A Both. In order to keep the geographical area manageable you would want to reduce the number of representatives and the number of voters.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q Why do you think no other countries around the world have adopted STV if it's so good?

A I think that all the changes that have occurred in the last 15-20 years have been driven by governments rather than people and this has resulted in the introduction of systems that favour governments rather than voters.

Q Do you think this could produce weak local candidates and reduce competition to issues of personality?

A It's a possibility. Studies have shown that some people vote on the basis of personality, some vote on the basis of party ideology and some vote on the basis of issues. I'm not sure it would drive people to vote according to personality.

STV drops the candidates with the lowest numbers of votes and this allows a result in which the candidate elected must have a majority of support. In comparison with PR this is a superior system in that it reduces the party's ability to control the members but presumably most candidates elected will be members of parties and they will still have control over them in the legislature. The fact that the electorate decides which candidates are elected means that the voters are able to elect people who may not be so beholden to the party. And under STV you only need a quota of the votes rather than a majority.