

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

GRAND FORKS PUBLIC HEARING
DATED 10 MAY 2004
AT SELKIRK COLLEGE

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.

David Pehota

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

A presentation addressing why a PR system should be implemented in BC. In addition, I will propose a particular form of PR, STV, and demonstrate how it would meet the needs of British Columbians, rural and urban.

KEY THEMES

Mr. Pehota discussed the outdated nature of FPTP, and the damaging character of the system as a result of its production of exaggerated majorities, executive dominance, political polarization, its unrepresentative nature, and its tendency to encourage strategic voting. The presenter discussed the advantages and mechanics of STV as the desirable replacement of the current system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Pehota recommended that the Citizens' Assembly advocate:

1. Changing the current FPTP system to a PR electoral system.
2. STV as the most voter empowering form of PR. Mr. Pehota recommended a system of STV with multi-member district consisting of between five and seven members using the Droop quota electoral formula.
3. For a preferential ballot for choosing a new electoral system.
4. For municipal elections to use forms other than SMP and Wards.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

Q Have you ever seen STV voting yourself?

A I haven't ever visited a country that has used it. The Republic of Ireland has used it since 1921 and Northern Ireland uses it now also.

- Q Will it produce more spoiled ballots?
- A No, it shouldn't as voters get more choice with STV than any other system. With STV, not only can you vote for a woman that reflects your political belief, you can preference your ballot to vote for all the women regardless of their political persuasion.
- Q How do we address the problem of making rural ridings larger?
- A Certainly geographically the riding gets larger but you will have four or five members representing you, so you still have constituency representation but the point I really like about it is that it is the most voter driven system. Unlike MMP, that tends to be somewhat party driven, under STV parties will run as many candidates as they feel will win seats but you get to choose who will be that party's candidate. You get a general election and a primary election in one.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

- Q How big of a riding are you talking about?
- A Under the current 79 member house you would have to redistribute them according to population density. So you would end up with between thirteen and fifteen constituencies. In terms of the ratio of population to members in the legislature; that number has continued to grow. According to a formula used by political scientists the legislature should be double its current size.

Q What is the experience in Ireland and Malta in terms of electing women?

A Ireland, prior to 1980, elected more women than any other state in the western world, however, following the second wave of feminism nations with party list systems overtook that number. We are much more diverse than Ireland, Ireland is homogenous; we need to represent a much more diverse set of interests.

Q Could it be the case that all the representatives would end up at the ends of the constituencies?

A People tend to be regional and parties would try to select candidates that were spatially dispersed.