

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

LANGLEY PUBLIC HEARING
DATED 20 MAY 2004
AT THE HAMPTON 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.

Maxwell Anderson

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

The Committee for Voting Equity in BC recommends a moderate semi-proportional system called MMS, which uses proven elements to give voters what they want and make sure the voters' intentions are better reflected in Victoria.

KEY THEMES

Mr. Anderson expressed the need for moderate reform of the electoral system in order to encourage voter turnout, enhance the representation of parties in the legislature, provide more choices on the ballot, and avoid wastage of cast votes via the introduction of a system that effectively translates votes cast into seats won. Mr. Anderson demonstrated how the results of the last three provincial elections varied using the German model of MMP, STV (in 2001 only using 5 member districts), and MMS.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The presenter recommended a variant of MMP, termed a "Moderate Mixed System" (MMS), in which the top-up seats are only half compensating. MMS provides simplicity in voting, as citizens are able to cast a ballot as under the current system if they so desire. Under MMS there would be 59 local seats and 20 list (compensatory) seats allocated regionally. The regional seats would be filled using an open list. The provision of regional list seats would enable the representation of minority interests. Mr. Anderson advocated use of the alternative vote (AV) to elect constituency candidates. According to the presenter the system would result in a more reasonable distribution of seats as a consequence of a moderate approach designed to appeal to all voters. Mr. Anderson also suggested a potential phrasing of the referendum question.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

Q How is MMS better than pure PR if the disproportionality under MMS is higher?

A The disproportionality under MMS is half of what it is under the current system. I am opposed to STV as you don't want to have to be voting for five people, it becomes too complicated. This is a moderate step to introduce an element of proportionality.

Q Is it important to you how long it takes to get an election result?

A I estimate that it would take three times as long as it does currently if it is done manually. If it is done electronically it would be instantaneous.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q If you have a preference vote, is there a threshold that you are trying to achieve, is it 50% plus one?

A Almost. Just until the electoral officer can see that no-one can catch up to the frontrunner. But usually the winner will have more than half of the support of the electorate.

Q In your 2001 example you showed Unity getting one seat and you didn't award anything to the Marijuana Party, in every model that I've done both parties would have received a seat; is there any reason you didn't award the Marijuana Party a seat?

A You are correct, the vote was almost identical. The reason it comes out this way, is because of the regional division of the list seats. The distribution of votes within these regions determines the allocation of seats.