

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

NANAIMO PUBLIC HEARING DATED
27 MAY 2004 AT COAST BASTION HOTEL

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.

Norman Abbey

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

Replace our present system of disproportional representation with proportional representation. The recent federal rule-change to 'proportional financing' of elections is an encouraging first step.

KEY THEMES

Norman Abbey expressed concern about the disproportionality of 2001 election outcome, voter apathy, western alienation and the democratic deficit. He praised establishment of Citizens' Assembly and the passage of Bill C-24 introducing federal party funding based on number of votes each party receives in the federal election, which will encourage citizens to vote sincerely rather than strategically. Mr Abbey spoke in opposition to Bill 52, which established a 60 per cent threshold for the referendum that will be held if the Assembly recommends an alternative electoral system. He also opposed the recent decision by the Canadian Broadcasters to exclude the Green Party of Canada from the federal election leaders' debate. Mr Abbey supported the introduction of a proportional representation electoral system in BC, but was content to leave the decision on which PR system to introduce to the Citizens' Assembly.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Norman Abbey recommended the introduction of proportional representation in British Columbia.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

One member of the panel sought clarification on elements of the presentation.

Q	What are the values that you see in PR for BC?
A	It would be proportional rather than disproportional like the last election. I also believe that voter turnout would be higher with PR. I think meaningful participation is very important.

Comment from panel: There were no further comments from the panel.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Following this presentation quite a few members of the audience had questions.

Q	You refer to the federal bill C-24, I presume that only applies to the federal vote. Is that within the mandate of the assembly to introduce at a provincial level?
A	There are a whole number of provisions in C-24 that would be useful in British Columbia.
Q	What do you think would be necessary in terms of a referendum question and getting people out to vote?
A	Well that's up to the Assembly but I'm just concerned about raising the bar in the process when it's meant to be inclusive.
Q	Do you think there might be some value in raising the vote to 60 per cent, to make sure that the Assembly proposes a system that requires a broad consensus of support?
A	I think we'll make the hurdle easily anyway but I think it's ridiculous that a vote to break up the country only required 50 per cent plus one, whereas a referendum on electoral reform in BC requires must have 60 per cent support.

Comment: There were no further comments from the audience.

SUBMISSION: NO