

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

POWELL RIVER PUBLIC HEARING DATED
15 MAY 2004 AT THE CEDAR ROOM, POWELL
RIVER RECREATION CENTRE

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.

Guy Hawkins

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

My presentation would focus on having a no-party system like in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories.

KEY THEMES

Guy Hawkins expressed concern that the Assembly is not capable of effective reform because of the limits imposed by its mandate. He argued that the feature of the BC political system most in need of reform is the concentration of political power in the Premier. The requirement that the Assembly only consider electoral systems consistent with the Westminster parliamentary system prevents it from considering the models in use in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. In these systems the power of the premier's office and cabinet is severely restricted due to the fact that it is the legislative body that elects the premier and cabinet.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Guy Hawkins recommended that "the Citizens' Assembly address the biased directive as inappropriate" and that it act "as a forum for the people of this province and not in the interests of special interest groups such as the Fraser Institute."

Quote: "If the Assembly can only entertain models that conform to the Westminster System, you are not able to assess models for electing MLAs that are actually in use in Canada in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut which do not conform to the Westminster Parliamentary System."

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

There were no questions or comments from the panel.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

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

Q	Cherie said that their only restriction on the mandate is the number of seats. Do you have any other restrictions on
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	you mandate?
A	(Panel member) Yes, any proposed electoral system must be consistent with the constitution of Canada and the Westminster parliamentary system.
Q	What I heard Guy proposing was that we change the constitution.
A	My recommendation is that the Citizens' Assembly address the biased directive as inappropriate and that you act as a forum for the people of this province and not in the interests of special interest groups such as the Fraser Institute?
Q	But their mandate is not to go outside the constitution?
A	No, I recommend that the Assembly present a report that protests the restriction of the mandate, and then outlines the system that they would like to see without the limitations of the mandate.
Q	I agree completely with your assessment. What if the assembly made a report within the limitations of the mandate, and then we introduced a system of PR and a future government could go back and revise the process.
A	I would accept that as a compromise. But I think it would be even better if we adopted a system like that of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut.
Q	Recently Nunavut and the Northwest Territories were turned down for representation during talks about missile defence with the US. My concern would be that if we also adopted this system then we would also be treated as a second class province.
A	No, I don't believe that would be the case. That decision was based on the government's support for missile defence, not on the political system in Nunavut.

Comment: There were no further comments from the audience.

SUBMISSION: YES