

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

PRINCE RUPERT PUBLIC HEARING
DATED 9 JUNE 2004
AT THE CREST 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.

David Konsmo

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

A presentation in support of proportional representation.

KEY THEMES

Mr. Konsmo discussed his candidacy for the Green Party, and the fact that the Greens have long advocated a change to proportional representation. The presenter expressed the opinion that it has become apparent that the drastic mood swings of voters are the result of individual political realignments. According to Mr. Konsmo, this is a trend that has been snowballing in the last few years as increasing numbers of voters abandon their traditional party ties. This has created problems for democracy as voters come out to punish the incumbent party, often resulting in the decimation of that party and the emergence of a monolithic entity with few opposition members. This has had the effect of disillusioning voters as they do not recognize the effect that their vote will have. Mr. Konsmo stated that in a democracy the institution of checks and balances is very valuable. Traditionally, these have been institutional in the form of courts, for example, but the Citizens' Assembly presents an opportunity for our society to look at the institution of elections themselves. Mr. Konsmo argued that introducing PR would provide an institution of sober second thought for voters as you will not be stuck with a legislature that you can't live with, and parties will no longer be able to get carried away with their ideological objectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Konsmo recommended the introduction of a system of proportional representation.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

- Q Could you provide more details regarding what kind of PR system might be more useful, and what you would give up in the change?
- A I haven't given too much thought to it except that parties gaining a certain percentage of the vote should gain a certain percentage of seats. There should be a threshold set of around 10% of the vote as I feel the system could become unwieldy otherwise.

Q Are you willing to lose your local representative?

A No, certainly not. But I am willing to share that representative with surrounding areas. I think if you can devise a system that will give representation to us all that we may lose an element of that personal contact which is a strength of the current system. But if you elect a member that doesn't heed the will of the electorate then you don't have any local representation anyway. Perhaps you could introduce a system that enables the recall of members if they don't fulfill a stipulated list of responsibilities.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q What are your thoughts regarding MMP where half of the members remain as local members and half are elected proportionately?

A It sounds to me that we should increase the number of members in the legislature and that would be alright with me. There are various possibilities.

Comment If there was an increase in the size of the legislature then my representative will become, for example, one in hundred rather than one in seventy-nine so there is a slight decline in local representation but there would be an increase in the representation of my political views.

Comment Since I moved to BC I have been appalled with how the provincial government works and how polarized it is. I don't think that has served us well and I'm hoping this process will bring a change as we have too much conflict and wasted energy with political views that are far to the right or far to the left.