

# PRESENTATION SUMMARY

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RICHMOND PUBLIC HEARING DATED  
4 MAY 2004 AT THE VANCOUVER AIRPORT  
MARRIOTT HOTEL, RICHMOND

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](http://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.

# Nick Loenen

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## DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

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Preferential-Plus: a blend of multi-seat and single-seat ridings designed for maximum diffusion of authority at the top, and maximum popular participation at the bottom.

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## KEY THEMES

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Nick Loenen argued that votes are wasted under the current electoral system when the majority of voters may not support the winning candidate in a riding.

In contrast, he described the Single Transferable Vote (STV) electoral system as giving more choice to the voter, with more emphasis on candidates rather than parties. This would be more appropriate for BC because Canadians are not partisan-minded and are practical rather than ideological.

However, Mr Loenen also explained that the geography of BC demands the retention of some single member seats in the north of the province, with MLAs elected using the Alternative Vote (AV) electoral system.

For this reason, he supports the adoption of the 'Preferential-Plus' system, a mixed STV/AV system. The combination of majoritarian and PR ridings means that 'preferential plus' is a semi proportional system. Mr Loenen argued that BC's unique geography, political culture and system of government require an electoral system that has been designed specifically for BC

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Nick Loenen recommends the adoption of 'Preferential-Plus' system as outlined in his submission. This system combines multi-member STV ridings with nine single-member AV ridings in Northern BC.

*Quotes: "STV puts voters in the driving seat."*

*"PR is all about parties, but STV is all about people."*

*"It is very important that we have a home-made, made-in-BC solution."*

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## QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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There were three members of the panel who sought clarification on elements of the presentation.

Q	What do you think about 'voting above the line' in Australia?
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A	It is terrible. It removes the choice from the people and gives it to the politicians. It transforms a preferential system into a party list system.
Q	Why doesn't STV work for the entire province?
A	You will not be able to sell that because the world beyond Hope is very different to the rest of the province. The North is very cynical already, so we need to bring in the people in the north of the province and include them in the system. The northern ridings will not buy into STV but we will still be able to retain an element of proportionality with this system.
Q	Do you think a strong opposition is important?
A	Absolutely. The legislature is currently not functional because there is no legislative control over the executive. An STV system will free MLAs from party control.
Q	What's your opinion on the adversarial campaigning that occurs under STV?
A	I don't think that it is that adversarial. The Irish Prime Minister has argued that a preferential ballot promotes a consensus system. The dynamics of a preferential ballot force people to be nice to each other. It gives incentive to people to work together, constructively. We no longer have any parties that pretend to be in the centre – the public interest demands that we have a centrist policy platform.

### Comment from panel

There were no comments from the panel.

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### QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

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

Q	I'm confused about a preferential vote. What if you don't want to give a second and third choice? What if you only want to express one preference?
A	My system only requires you to rank as many candidates as you wish.

Q	How are the cabinet members chosen, where does the Premier come from?
A	The same as in the current system.
Q	You're setting up two classes of voters. Voters in the north will still have wasted votes and be unable to vote for minor parties, whereas voters in STV ridings will have more choice?
A	STV will not sell in the north. We're talking about the politics of the possible.

***Comment:***

One member of the audience expressed concern that Mr Loenen was proposing 14 “huge ridings” with 5 members each when provincial ridings are already large.

SUBMISSION: yes

SUBMISSION ID# 0035