

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

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 BY CLICKING ON "GET INVOLVED". IF SUCH A SUBMISSION IS AVAILABLE, IT WILL BE NOTED AT THE END OF THIS REPORT.

Bob Simpson

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

A description of this presentation is not available as the presenter did not pre-register for this event.

KEY THEMES

Bob Simpson argued that we need to recognize the growing cost of being elected under our current electoral system, which makes political parties inevitable. He perceived the greatest weakness of our present system as being the virtually complete dominance of one party.

Mr Simpson opposed the introduction of a PR electoral system in BC because it would augment the power of parties in the legislature. He also argued that PR increases the likelihood of minority government which encourages backroom deals.

Mr Simpson proposed an electoral system which maintains geographical representation in the province and ensures more balance in the legislature by electing the ‘runner-up’ in a number of constituencies in addition to the winning candidate.

As an example, 50 members (out of 75) would be elected from single member constituencies. The other 25 would be elected from the candidates who were runners up with the highest votes.

Mr Simpson argued that an additional advantage of the system was that it would not require voters to do anything differently to the current system, and thus would not require a re-education programme.

He also advocated for the need to reform the legislature to increase the independence of MLAs and increase the oversight of public servants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr Simpson recommended the adoption of an electoral system which elects a number of ‘runner-up’ candidates to the legislature in addition to the winning candidate in each constituency, as outlined in his submission.

Quote: “The last thing our system needs is to augment the power of parties in the legislature and proportional representation does just that.”

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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

Q	Wouldn't this system mean that there would still be two major parties represented in the legislature?
A	In my submission I propose two alternatives. The first is party lists made up of all the candidates who were runners up in constituencies, who would be elected in order of the number of votes they received. This would mean that more than two parties could be represented.
Q	Doesn't this mean that people who have been defeated in the riding can still be elected to the legislature?
A	My biggest fear with PR is giving so much power to political parties that they can dictate who will be in the legislature.
Q	But there will be runners up elected?
A	Yes there will.

Comment from panel

There were no comments from the panel.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

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

Q	I think there should be a representative from each political party within the government.
A	Ideally that sounds great, but if there are too many parties that would make the legislature unworkable.
Q	Are you proposing that we reduce the number of ridings to 50?
A	That was just an example that I gave. I used those figures only as an illustration. You can have any number in the legislature.
Q	But your system requires a reduction in the number of ridings and I can assure you that this would not be popular around the province. How would you decide which ridings also got to elect a second representative?

A	You could pair ridings and the person who comes in with the third highest vote in that pair could be elected as an additional member to represent those ridings.
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Comment: There were no comments from the audience.

SUBMISSION: YES

SUBMISSION ID# TO FOLLOW