

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

SIDNEY/VICTORIA PUBLIC HEARING
DATED 15 MAY 2004
AT THE HOLIDAY INN VICTORIA

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 Buchanan

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

The restoration of honesty and integrity to the democratic process.

KEY THEMES

Mr. Buchanan expressed the opinion that parliamentary democracy has degenerated leading to voter disaffection and disenchantment. The presenter went on to note several concerns including the absence of intelligent debate in the legislature; the tendency of the current first past the post (FPTP) electoral system to unfairly distort the translation of votes into seats; the ability of PR systems to provide proportional results for parties but not necessarily for voters; the likelihood of PR leading to unstable governments via the inclusion of multiple minor parties; evidence of corruption in candidate selection processes and campaign financing; declining voter turnout; and the undue influence of lobbyists funded by anonymous donors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Buchanan recommended retaining the current FPTP system, while ensuring the election of an opposition via the creation of dual member districts. The presenter stated that this process would provide voters with a choice between representatives and instill local rivalry between candidates. Further, Mr. Buchanan recommended that members within the legislature have their voting power weighted in accordance with the proportion of the vote they received in the electorate. According to the presenter, this system would diminish the power of party whips and lobby groups. Mr. Buchanan also supported the printing of standardized profiles of candidates standing for election by the Chief Electoral Officer and the enforcement of limitations on election expenses.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q Since you've drawn attention to the internal democracy of political parties; would you favour a system in which every party had to meet a set of standards such as transparency and accountability to ensure that parties are not involved in shenanigans?

A I would absolutely favour that.