

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.

Bryan Schwartz

University of Manitoba

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

I propose that BC adopt proportional representation as its electoral voting model. Statistical analysis shows that the addition of 15-20% list seats creates a surprisingly high level of correlation between votes cast and seats won. This proposal addresses the wasted vote phenomenon without abandoning the salient features of the current system.

KEY THEMES

Dr. Schwartz discussed the need to reform the current FPTP system in order to introduce an element of proportionality. The presenter discussed the problems of disproportionality across the provinces and the ability of FPTP to produce and sustain regional parties at the federal level.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Dr. Schwartz recommended the adoption of a “PR Light” system. This system is a MMP system in which 20% of seats are allocated as compensatory seats that would go to the parties that are under-represented on the basis of the popular vote. Dr. Schwartz argued that PR Light would keep the best features of the current system, including the fact that most members remain accountable to a single constituency. Cost, ease of transition and simplicity were cited as the critical factors in favour of the adoption of such a system. The presenter dismissed STV on the grounds of the geographical size of BC.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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| Q | Have you evaluated some of our last electoral results had we used this system? |
| A | No. I have done it for Manitoba, but I would be happy to run it for BC should the Citizens’ Assembly desire it. |
| Q | The LCC report backed away from addressing issues such as gender equality, First Nations representation, youth representation, and minority representation, choosing instead to encourage the parties to take these issues on board, how do you view these issues? |
| A | I don’t favour a rigidly mandated system of demographic allocation on any grounds, be it |

gender, minority status or whatever. The studies seem to indicate that some form of PR leads to more diverse representation on all grounds. I believe in Nanavut there was a referendum on whether or not to have strict gender parity and it was shot down by both men and women. I think PR light would substantially increase demographic and gender diversity, and if it doesn't then maybe you need more than 15% or 20% compensatory seats, but I believe it will make a positive contribution to diversity within the legislature.

Q With PR Light having 15-20% of seats as compensation seats, this is about 13 top-up seats, it is very appealing under MMP to not have to increase district size very much, is there a statistic of proportionality between your option and the two-thirds one-third proposal?

A The difference in proportionality was not great between 15 and 25 percent. The advantage of PR Light is that you are still likely to get majority governments. If you get up to 40 or 50 per cent you are unlikely to get majority governments again.

Q A potential criticism of this system is that it creates two classes of MPs; how do you see the province reconciling that and employing the list MPs?

A My view is that people who go door to door and get elected the hard way have a different status than those elected by the party list. You should only be able to get elected on the party list once, at least in a row. Getting elected the hard way is important if you want to be in cabinet. No-one should continue to serve in the legislature without doing it the hard way.