

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.

Roy Sutherland

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

It's past time BC has a different voting system.

KEY THEMES

Dr. Sutherland expressed his dissatisfaction with the current FPTP electoral system as a voter of 62 years. He stated his frustration with BC's "archaic" voting system when so many other countries have recognized the inequalities of FPTP and have adopted proportional systems. Dr. Sutherland discussed the problem of exaggerated majorities under our current system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Dr. Sutherland recommended a system of MMP composed of two members per riding and two votes per ballot, one vote for a favoured candidate, and one vote for a political party. The presenter further stated the need for any change to the electoral system be given a guaranteed trial period of two or three elections before it is able to be changed. Dr. Sutherland also expressed support for compulsory voting that may be implemented using a system of tax rewards (for voting) or tax penalties (for not voting). A survey designed to tap the values of citizens that do not vote to ascertain whether they are not voting as a result of disillusionment with the political system was also suggested.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q I wonder if compulsory voting, or voting incentives just masks the problem of voter disenchantment, by forcing people to vote you are not finding out the reasons behind why people aren't voting?

A I understand that Australia has compulsory voting, but I don't know how to get at the people who don't vote. It would be very costly to get everyone to court so you have to keep it simple.

Q There is a group of people in Victoria called the Broad Coalition, and we have been doing surveys on the street surveying of voters over the past year to find out why people don't vote. And when people state that they are undecided we ask them why and they often say either that politicians are crooks, or that there isn't a party that they can

support. To me, that means that they are crying out for more diversity of parties, they don't like the choices that they have. And the other feeling that they can't trust politicians is because they have been lied to over and over again, and perhaps that is systemic within the two-party system.