

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

SURREY-SOUTH PUBLIC HEARING
DATED 8 MAY 2004
AT THE ASTON PACIFIC INN

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.

Steven Faraher-Amidon

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

A focus on the pros and cons of varying types of political electoral reform, focusing particularly on the benefits and historical aspects of reforms as measured by the experience of other nations who have made changes and how these may impact the proposed reform in BC.

KEY THEMES

The presenter expressed the need for electoral reform in BC in order to ensure the fair translation of votes into seats; to prevent the dominance of the governing party; to encourage an open consensual style of politics; and to reinvigorate voter engagement in the political process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Faraher-Amidon recommended reform of the current SMP system in order to ensure that all votes count and to stimulate voter turnout.

Quote: A citizenry which decides to not participate in the most fundamental of our democratic processes, voting, attests to the fundamental need for change in our electoral process.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

- Q You would like to see a proportional representation system, are you looking at a mixed system to ensure some geographic representation or a pure PR system?
- A I would urge you all to consider that it need not necessarily be one-person one-vote in order to protect rural representation. I would tread carefully on that.
- Q Do you propose any sort of a threshold, or would you just suggest that one seventy-ninth of the vote would be enough?
- A The problem with thresholds is that you effectively disenfranchise those that are below the threshold.

People then often feel that they are no longer part of the system. You have to get people to feel that they are included in the system, so I would be against thresholds.

Q How important is it to you to have an MLA that you can identify with?

A I think it's very important. On the other hand if you have a system in place that you think is truly democratic I think that you can develop identification with your MLA.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q Regarding the power of the Premier, how would you be able to change that, how would you give the power to the individual MLAs?

A Probably one of the biggest differences between the US and Canada is what you're talking about. I really dislike the sway of the Premier. You could make more clearly identifiable which actions result in a recall, and what votes allow the government to fall or stand. This really frees the MLAs to vote what they think is right.