

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

SURREY PUBLIC HEARING
DATED 31 MAY 2004
AT THE SHERATON GUILDFORD HOTEL

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.

Nikolas Jeffrey

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

I have a great fondness for tradition and history and I believe that most types of PR have absolutely no place in BC or Canada, but our pure first-past-the-post system will not be viewed as an acceptable electoral method in the near future. I wish to propose an evolution of our current system.

KEY THEMES

Mr. Jeffrey expressed the view that PR has no place in Canada or British Columbia, yet electoral change appears inevitable as a result of rising voter apathy and alienation. The presenter argued that those stressing the need to radically alter the electoral system are doing it out of self interest. According to Mr. Jeffrey, this does not make their opinion invalid however we should remain aware of their ultimate goals. Mr. Jeffrey stated that an element of proportionality is desirable to answer the complaints of wasted votes and strategic voting. The presenter argued the need to vote for candidates on the basis of merit. Mr. Jeffrey rejected the notion of “change for changes sake” and advocated affecting reform through evolution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The presenter recommended the introduction of MMP in which the party list members are organized on a regional basis. Two-thirds of the seats in each region would be standard electoral districts, the other one-third would constitute regional PR seats. Each party would list by priority their district candidates in each region and candidates that are elected for a local district would be removed from their party’s closed list. Mr. Jeffrey advocated a 10% threshold for parties to qualify for compensatory seats. The number of regional seats allocated to each party under this system would be calculated using the least remainder method. The province would be divided into four regions: Victoria and Island, Vancouver, Fraser Valley, and the Interior. Regardless of division, regions should be comprised of no less than 12 seats and no more than 30 seats.

Quote: I firmly believe that this method is an evolution of our traditional Westminster system, for it retains the ability to vote freely for your local representative, yet it balances the overall wishes of the electorate. Under this system, voters will be able to feel that their vote truly mattered and was not wasted.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

Q You are advocating a one-third, two-thirds split between party list members and local candidates; why did you choose this division?

A We have to have strong government. This system balances out the inequities but still allows strong government to exist. This gives minor parties such as the Greens the opportunity to have their voice heard but not to form government.

Q You left off the North in your regional divisions?

A I did. But I'm not excluding it. It is simply because without delving into the census results it would throw the numbers off in the other regions. I would suggest that after the next census a Northern region with 12 seats would be developed.

Q Do you support an open or closed list?

A A closed list. The problem with an open list is that it is mired in delays. The key thing is simplicity, having a long ballot is not simple. If the parties put a very unpopular MP at the top of their list then that is just too bad.