

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.

James Proctor

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

An executive-PR (for provincial parties) and a single transferable vote (for riding candidates).

KEY THEMES

Mr. Proctor discussed the introduction of an easy-mix electoral system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The presenter recommended:

1. The adoption of an easy-mix system called EMES or ‘MS’, in which the voters cast two ballots: one to elect their preferred provincial party and party leader (using PR), and one to elect their preferred local riding candidate (using STV on a regional basis). Mr. Proctor noted that while the counting of ballots under STV may be complicated, the voters need only to concern themselves with the ballot which is itself easy to follow, the voting process could be clearly explained and illustrated in a pre-election mail-out
2. Each registered voter receive a Voter’s Guide to help them in their selection of a preferred political party; in their selection of riding candidates, and help them with information about the new voting system (including where and how to vote).
3. A second round of Citizens’ Assembly talks given both the successful implementation of the first round of electoral-reform recommendations, and the fact that a number of significant voter-electoral issues remain unaddressed involving both the provincial and local governance levels.

According to Mr. Proctor, the introduction of EMES would:

1. Facilitate an active, balanced role between party representatives and riding representatives in the House.
2. Enable each riding to retain a distinct, accountable representative.
3. Allow minority parties (and opinions) in the House to be enhanced though the election of many different kinds of proven party leaders.
4. Mitigate the problem of vote stacking in local riding associations by enabling parties to place more than one more candidate on the ballot.

5. Provide a simple two-vote ballot.
6. Temper party discipline.
7. Mitigate the problem of successive, minority governments by providing an interim-policy, fall-back procedure.
8. Encourage consensus based politics in the legislature.
9. Prevent the distorted translation of votes into seats that currently occurs under FPTP, without requiring complicating factors such as (open or closed) party lists, separate run-off elections, or a more complicated version of the mixed electoral system.

Quote: It is argued that the EMES electoral model in particular gives to the BC voting public both the simplicity required in a voting system, and adequately satisfies the greatest possible range of positive electoral values that British Columbians hold.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

Q Could you tell me the main difference between your system and MMP?

A I can't say specifically. I would say that the use of party lists is more complicated under MMP; why do you need that when you can have representation from individuals, MMP makes is unnecessarily complex.

Q What happens to the party vote if you don't have a party list?

A I'm saying that it is guaranteed that the party leaders get into the house, but from there the party leaders have to earn the support of the individual MLA's.

Q So you elect the leaders separately from the constituency member?

A Yes, that is the only way that they get elected, but they have to meet certain conditions such as being a member of a party registered with Elections BC;

that their party does not promote criminal hate; and that they are elected within their open party via a democratic vote.

Q Staying within our mandate of 79 seats, where will we get these seats for the leaders?

A They do not have to earn a seat in any particular riding, but the party ballot will facilitate the introduction of more independent candidates. We don't want to lose the balance of party representation. We want to have more minor party representation in the house, and then they have to earn the confidence of the MLAs. If there is a problem of too much representation then the threshold required for representation could be increased.