

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

VALEMOUNT PUBLIC HEARING DATED
7 MAY 2004 AT THE HOLIDAY INN,
VALEMOUNT

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.

Edwin Jones

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

Local representation is very important, especially for voters in less densely populated areas. Any electoral system for BC should ensure that each riding has a local representative who lives in that riding and can argue on behalf of the riding in Victoria.

KEY THEMES

Mr Jones spoke in favour of proportional representation as giving a voice to minority groups, but also argued that local representation is very important in BC. He stated that when ridings are based on population, people who live in the interior often feel that they don't have a say because they don't have many votes.

He would prefer an electoral system where every riding has a local candidate who lives in that riding and knows the riding intimately to argue on behalf of the local community when government decisions are made.

Quote: "We should always have one representative that is specifically representing that riding, and lives in the riding, and who has a chance to influence government decisions."

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

There were no questions or comments from the panel.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Following this presentation quite a few members of the audience had questions for the panel and the facilitator.

Q	Is there anyone here who could dispel the fear that sometimes accompanies electoral reform when we think about the examples of Italy and Israel?
A	Some alternate examples could be Germany and New Zealand, which also have a form of PR but seem to be more stable. Also, with government turnover in Italy, often it's more of a cabinet shuffle rather than a government change.
Q	Have people approached you about the concept of staggered elections, where a third of the legislature is elected each year? Also,

	do you have any statistics about the proportion of British Columbians who belong to a political party or who make more contributions to political parties? In other jurisdictions there may be a lot more participation.
A	Staggered elections are not part of our mandate. Electoral financing is also not in the mandate.
Q	Is there anything in your mandate that requires that a government will actually hold a referendum on this?
A	All parties have indicated that they will uphold the results of a referendum. That doesn't mean that party couldn't change their mind but there would potentially be a large public outcry in that event.
Q	How do you take all the information from the public hearings and incorporate this into your report?
A	All of the notes from the public hearings are published on the web. Ken Carty will read the reports and compile a summary from a sense of your comments. In addition, the members that attend each of the meetings will discuss the presentations that they have heard in their smaller groups and at a larger meeting with all members.
Q	Do you feel that the government will actually listen to you? It's very discouraging – I've been on so many committees where the government has said "nice report" and then filed it away. I get the sense that governments often conduct these exercise so that it looks like they are listening to the public but I feel very jaded about whether anything will actually happen.
A	Well, there's 160 members who will kick up a big stink if our recommendation is ignored. We have to try, if we say why bother then the government wins. (Facilitator) This is the first time in the history of democracies that a body like this has been created in a legislature. When we come out with a report, it doesn't go to the government as advice, it goes straight to the people as a referendum. All of the parties have supported this initiative. We're going straight to the people with our advice.
Q	How much is costing the government to have this process?
A	\$5.5 million dollars.
Q	And you'll know how it's spent?
A	Absolutely, every dime. That's why there's no coffee!

Q	How will you make a recommendation in your report?
A	(Facilitator) There will be three parts to the report. We will summarise what we've learned through the learning process, from the public hearings and from the public submissions. But at the end of the day it's the members' decision. We're not going to take a poll and say 82 presentations supported MMP.
Q	If it goes to referendum, what sort of question will it be – do you write the question?
A	The question will be very simple, something along the lines of 'do you agree with the recommendation of the Citizens' Assembly?'

SUBMISSION: NO