

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

VANCOUVER1 PUBLIC HEARING DATED
3 MAY 2004 AT MORRIS J. WOSK CENTRE
FOR DIALOGUE

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.

Alex Boston

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

Approval voting is an easy to learn modification of either our present system or proportional representation (or a combination of the two) that stops vote-splitting.

KEY THEMES

The presenter stressed the need to increase fairness in elections by instituting a simple system. Mr. Boston stated that introducing a new system such as approval voting possesses the potential to reduce strategic voting and negative campaigning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The presenter recommended a change to approval voting that allows the voter to choose more than one candidate if they "approve" of numerous contestants.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

- Q You give a list of places where this has been used, has it been used anywhere with parties or blocs that we could see the effects it has?
- A No, I wasn't able to find that.
- Q To a degree, can't this system be used to vote against someone? Doesn't this dilute the person's vote, if you vote for multiple people?
- A That's true, if there is someone that you really want and someone that you could live with, there is no differentiation under this system. If you get a more complicated system involving ranking then there is the potential for strategic voting to mess things up, approval voting is an attempt to get away from that.
- Q What effect do you think approval voting would have on the parties?

A One effect might be less negative campaigning, candidates may listen more to minor party platforms as they try to steal their good ideas to encourage multiple votes. It might make parties more willing to listen and be responsive to voters.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Following this presentation quite a few members of the audience had questions.

Q I wonder under this system whether the winner may not necessarily be approved by most but acceptable to most?

A That is one possibility. Studies have shown that that doesn't happen very often, there is a chance of compromise candidates but the evidence suggests that voters raise their standards. It comes down to each individual voter setting their own bar of approval.

Q Are the voters ranking their candidates?

A No, the voter places a mark beside the name, with a ranking system strategic voting may enter into the system. Approval voting also precludes the problem of spoiled ballots.