

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.

Ian Gregson

Vancouver-Hastings Green Party

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

Presentation of article from SFU News.

(see www.citizensassembly.bc.ca/public/news/2004/03/dmaclachlan-3_0403310858-711). Article proposes MMP in New Zealand style.

KEY THEMES

The presenter discussed the problem of disproportionality; the historical adoption and implications of FPTP in BC; wasted votes; and the need for electoral reform of a proportional nature to improve the balance of parties in the legislature and to increase the representation of women and minorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The presenter recommended a change to MMP modeled upon the New Zealand example.

Quote: At a time when British Columbians are turning out in fewer numbers for their elections, the BC Liberal government has initiated the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform. This public consultation process will, if implemented, essentially revamp our aging electoral process in favour of one that more accurately reflects how people vote.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

- Q You suggest that MMP as used in NZ is the most suitable for BC, what features make the NZ system more suitable than that used in Germany or Scotland?
- A It has a lot to do with geography. The proportion of the population in urban and rural areas is very similar and we also share a significant native population.
- Q Are there any mechanical features that you think are more suitable?

A The most critical point is the representation of the preferences of the voters, regardless of the mechanics.

Q Do you think this voting system is more complicated than the current system?

A Certainly, to a certain degree, there will need to be an education campaign by Elections BC, but we know that it's not an overly onerous process to educate people to that level.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

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

Q Your argument about adopting MMP in BC as it is akin to NZ geographically appears to proceed by analogy, on the basis of this logic shouldn't we use STV as in Ireland, or alternatively we could be characterized as just like Finland, shouldn't we be using open-list PR? How do you respond to that?

A It's essentially a personal opinion. Those countries have worked the system to suit them. Any individual geographic area can make a decision regarding what suits them best, but from what I've learned and what I've read New Zealand appears the best option.

Q Are you concerned by the fact that people are talking about manipulating the democratic process by reserving seats for women or minorities?

A I don't believe that they are actually doing that, but if you try and elect over 50 white males, of an Anglo Saxon background, you're not going to be very successful regardless of the system, and that's what the system in New Zealand is addressing. I don't think they're sitting down and saying we need "X" number of women on our team, they are doing it because they know that that will get them the votes.

SUBMISSION: YES

SUBMISSION ID# GREGSON-0064, GREGSON-0182