

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.

Joel DeYoung

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

I advocate a mixed proportional representation system of voting. The presentation will draw on my personal experiences working in previous election campaigns in BC, as well my experience with voting systems in other jurisdictions and countries. I will persuasively argue that modernizing our electoral system is critical to the very survival of our democracy.

KEY THEMES

The presenter addressed the need to enhance voter involvement in the political process and combat apathy; the unfair translation of votes into seats; the importance of local representation; and the desirability of modernizing the electoral system by introducing proportional representation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The presenter recommended a move to a mixed member proportional (MMP) system with a five per cent threshold. Mr. DeYoung stated that a move to MMP would provide voters with more meaningful choice between parties and candidates; remove the perceived "wasted vote"; and encourage compromise in the political process.

Quote: It is time we joined the overwhelming majority of western democracies in opting for a system that is not only more representative of the will of the electorate, but invites people from all walks of life back into the political process where they feel they will have a voice.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

Q With the system you're talking about one concern is over the two types of politicians, local representatives and list members: how would you envisage addressing that?

A I believe that party politics in our current system means that local members are more bound by the party whip than their local community. So I believe that while we would retain the same type of representation, I don't feel that it would be a

substantial difference from what we have today.

Q We cannot change the size of the legislature, how do you advocate we split the seats in our current 79 seat system?

A I'm not advocating any particular split. I know that some systems have a one-third/two-thirds split, obviously with any kind of change, leaving the number of seats the same is going to mean that you have larger ridings.

Q How did you come up with the 5% threshold?

A It's a threshold that's used in New Zealand and other countries. I do have concerns that in a PR system anyone that can get ten people together and start a party no matter what their ideas are could end up having a voice in the legislature. I think the concern then would become that coalition government would be so complicated that the government wouldn't be able to get anything done. I think people would expect for parties to have a position in the legislature at all there has to be a certain level of support in the population.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q I just wanted to respond to your comment about the different classes of MPs elected under this system, I think there might be a danger that you would create a "safe-house" for MPs, if they secured a high position on the list they may become unaccountable to citizens. Do you have any comments on that?

A Ultimately, the goal would be to fill the legislature in accordance with the popular vote that the parties received. So that party caucus is going to have to be answerable to the population of the province as a whole. The publication of the list must be a transparent process, perhaps organized by elections BC, so the party would have to be very careful to be transparent in this process.

Q I know of some systems such as this where the cabinet is formed by the list MPs and they are pre-chosen leaving the constituency members and the backbenchers without any influence. Do you feel that that could happen?

A I don't have enough knowledge of that happening but I would imagine that the formation of the cabinet would remain at the discretion of the Premier as it is now.

Q Have you thought outside the box regarding the necessity of political parties?

A I feel that political parties form an important part of the political process and that provide effective and practical ways for people to express their views.