

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.

Peter Rastall

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

General elections should be abolished and replaced by a continuing set of by-elections. Possibilities for proportional representation are considered.

KEY THEMES

The presenter felt that governmental accountability between elections needed to be enhanced, and policy stability increased. Mr. Rastall also expressed the need for a change in voting rules within the legislature.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The presenter recommended a "cyclical-election" scheme, that is, a continual series of by-elections, one or two per month, enabling continuous government accountability. Losing candidates may assign their votes to other losing candidate in a future by-election enabling a process of vote accumulation that may allow a minor party candidate to be elected. The presenter stated that this system should eliminate expensive electoral campaigns.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

Q Having one large election has the advantage of getting everyone's attention thereby helping to stimulate voter turnout, what happens to turnout with 79 by-elections?

A The system will produce more concentration on local issues. For a lot of the time no-one outside the electorate is going to care, but I'm not sure this is a disadvantage as the discussions one has in general elections tend to be superficial and matters of spin. I don't think they contribute very much to real political understanding.

Q What of the tendency for parties to treat candidates as sacrificial lambs given the occurrence of scandals and the timing of elections?

A I think our voters are a little more sophisticated than that, but I agree it is a possibility.

Q With people coming and going continuously, how would this scheme impact upon government stability?

A I don't really think it will make much difference.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q We currently have two members of one party and 77 of another party, so it would take almost 37 months to change the balance via by-elections, is that a realistic situation?

A Yes, if you start out from an extreme situation, that's true.

SUBMISSION: YES

SUBMISSION ID# RESTALL-0072