PRESENTATION SUMMARY

VANCOUVER PUBLIC HEARING JUNE 12, 2004 AT MARRIOTT PINNACLE HOTEL

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 Tunner

A simple modification of the current first-past-the-post system to obtain good proportional representation, while preserving the principle of locally elected MLAs. It will be illustrated with results from the last two provincial elections.

I have entitled my paper as some food for thoughts. The first-past-the-post (FPTP) system is not all bad, but there is a consensus that we should move toward a more proportional system. We should look at some of our basic objectives, features of a new system, and some examples. We are looking for a democratic system, and known local representatives. I feel it is very important that candidates should be nominated and elected locally. There should be a single ballot, no party lists.

Proportionality: we want a system that is reasonably proportional; there should be some proportionality constraint. Each party should have some part of proportional vote. The system must be simple and stable. It has to be easily understood by the electorate. The electorate must know how to cast their ballot. It is not a proper democracy if people don't know how to use their ballot.

Regarding electoral systems, we are looking at single member constituencies, and in a simple way. People have a first choice and a second choice, beyond that it is problematic. For the first counting (Count "A"), this would involve deleting the candidate with the least amount of votes. So, after the first choices are counted, and the second choices are counted, you continue the counting until one candidate reached 50% of the vote (alternative vote system). For the second count, (Count "B"), you assign uncounted 2nd choices. All candidates now have a first and second choice, which total "B". Unelected candidates are listed by party, in decreasing order of their "B" total. You then apply a proportionality constraint: you determine the minimum amounts of seats for each party, based on "A" (1 per 2% popular vote). For parties below the minimum, select from "B" list (top down) to achieve minimum.

If we took the example of a Citizens' Assembly, let's put that idea into our voting system. If we take the eight economic regions of BC, we elect a candidate, independent of a party who serves for a single term. You would have a component of 'unaffiliation'. In the examples, the yellow sections for the last three elections show what happened. In the 2nd set, there is a move toward proportionality. In the third set, we move toward more proportionality. In the 1996 election and with an Alternative Voting modified first-past-the-post system, and with more proportionality (wild card), the results would have been more proportional.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Change toward an alternative vote system modified to include more proportionality.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

Q   Your examples depend on how the second vote is cast. Do you have empirical evidence for your assumptions?

A   I didn't base this on any research. Obviously the second choice is unknown.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q   You said that any more than two choices was no good in your opinion, I have no trouble doing that?

A   I suspect that you may be a PhD candidate. Many people can cast many preferences, but when you put vast lists, and you are expected to pick 10 people, nobody ever does, it's not realistic. We want to know who the local representatives are. I don't like the idea of parties drawing up lists, in a smoke-filled room, or not so smoked-filled these days. A person needs to have a local face. I personally don't like the idea of a mixed system, where some people come out of shadowy party lists. Also maybe we would be better off with some randomness in there as well. But a non affiliated person should have a chance to be picked.

SUBMISSION: NO