

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

VERNON PUBLIC HEARING
DATED 21 JUNE 2004
AT THE PRESTIGE INN VERNON SALON

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.

Dave Nordstrom

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

While likely beyond the scope of the Citizens' Assembly mandate, this issue of sustaining and developing civic awareness and positive debating skills clearly transcends any reorganization of election procedures.

KEY THEMES

The presenter discussed his observations of the disappointing state of debates in Canadian politics, as exemplified by the recent leaders' debate. Mr. Nordstrom stated his support for the development of the core group of North Okanagan youth involved in a civil debating network referred to as the "Political Prep School" (PPS). According to Mr. Nordstrom, groups such as PPS provide a hopeful resolution for the disillusionment felt by individuals when observing the poor character of parliamentary debate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The presenter recommended that more attention be paid to the development of the procedures, attitudes, and skills required to sustain civic awareness and positive debating skills. Mr. Nordstrom stated that true states-people are not willing to run for office as a result of the hostile tactics involved and the requirement to tow the party line. The presenter argued that this leaves the field open to those combative individuals who favour single issues, are superficial thinkers, enjoy adversarial debate, and focus more on being elected than being representative.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

- Q Why are you so alienated from the system?
- A I'm not sure if you were listening to CBC on Sunday morning, but a presenter stated the date of 1964 as the start of the decline of expectations of young people in the political system. Since then there has been an increasing focus on the scramble for physical security. Young people today are the first generation, of the last four, who have less and less to look forward to so why would they expect anything of their government. Secondly, youth idealism is alive and well but there is less and less opportunity to contribute to meaningful debate, it is the party line all the way.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q I've been looking at voter turnout and the behavior within the legislature. That is something that is outside our mandate but this is a factor that is turning off voters in big numbers. Should we be giving the adjudicators in the House more powers?

A I'm talking about our community responsibility to be much more careful about who we prepare and select for office. So it's taking back responsibility for cultivating and electing representatives.

Q Are you advocating only cultivating certain citizens for office to the exclusion of others?

A No, that is not the intent of my submission.

SUBMISSION: YES SUBMISSION ID# 0488