

MAXIMIZING INFORMED DECISION- MAKING IN B.C.

**Bruce and Lis Welch
Community Dialogue
Stakeholder Roundtable**

with Dr. John Gastil,
Professor of Communications
Arts & Sciences at
Penn State University

The decision-making process, and
the decision-making process in B.C.
effectively, the decision-making process:
“How can British Columbia be a
decision-making process, be a decision
making process?”

Electoral reform. Harmonized Sales Tax. Transit funding. Referendums have become regular tools for decision-making in British Columbia and the result has often been increased political and regional division, confused voters and a platform for extreme ideas.

In the time of fake news, ideological biases and the rapid spread of misinformation, voters often have difficulty finding relevant, reliable and concise information to help them assess the policy issues that appear on their ballots. Is there a way to consult the public without divisive rhetoric and poor-quality public discourse? And when is a referendum an appropriate tool to do so?

Dr. John Gastil opened the gathering by proposing that BC is a prime place to spearhead innovation in deliberative democracy. Dr. Gastil presented the example of the Oregon Citizens’ Initiative Review, which convenes a citizens’ jury to deliberate and provide impartial advice to voters as part of an official state referendum process. Participants discussed the value of developing a range of high quality, effective processes for deliberative democracy that are scalable for different issues, levels of government, budgets and timelines.

This document provides a brief summary of the resulting themes, with a goal to inspire future innovation in public participation beyond the traditional referendum.

