

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

LILLOOET PUBLIC HEARING DATED
16 JUNE 2004 AT THE RECREATION CENTRE

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.

Kim Chute

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

Support for MMP and questions about the Citizens' Assembly process.

KEY THEMES

Kim Chute told the hearing that she had been a canvasser in the 2002 proportional representation initiative campaign which collected 98,000 signatures in 90 days. She argued that the campaign demonstrated the amount of support for a Mixed Member Proportional system in BC. Ms Chute supported the introduction of MMP with the amendments suggested by the Free Your Vote campaign and referred the audience to the Free Your Vote Society literature.

Ms Chute told the hearing that she wanted to raise a number of questions that go beyond the Citizens' Assembly's mandate. She asked why proportional representation initiative campaign was only given 90 days to collect signature and argued that this restrictive time limit seemed intentionally designed to thwart citizen initiatives. Ms Chute questioned whether the selection process for Assembly members was free from political bias and asked whether assembly members were socio-economically representative of the province. She challenged the referendum threshold set by the government for any alternative electoral system recommended by the assembly. Ms Chute also asked how limited the Assembly was by the requirement that its recommendation be consistent with Constitution of Canada and Westminster parliamentary system. She advised the Assembly to recommend legal recourse for when political parties break election promises.

Ms Chute identified two major problems with the current FPP electoral system. The first was that it compels supporters of smaller parties to vote strategically rather than for their party of choice. The second was that it helps to maintain the current 'corporatocracy' where the government bows to pressure from major corporations. She argued that PR would be a vast improvement. Ms Chute concluded by advising the Assembly to consider not only the translation of votes into seats but also to consider a number of political issues surrounding elections.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Kim Chute recommended the introduction of MMP in British Columbia.

Quote: "Rather than voting for the party that represents my beliefs and values, the current system makes that vote a game of risk."

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

There were three members of the panel who sought clarification on elements of the presentation.

Q	What sort of time frame would you suggest for citizen initiatives?
---	--------------------------------------------------------------------

A	I don't know, but I do know that analysis of the pro-rep campaign showed that the time frame was a key factor. I think that should be something the Citizens' Assembly thinks about.
Q	How would you feel about different parts of the province using different voting systems?
A	That's not a thought that has ever even entered my mind.
Q	There are many options in mixed systems. In our province we have a huge concentration of the population in the lower mainland and then huge rural ridings. How would you feel if people in the lower mainland had a different system to us up here?
A	I don't have enough information to answer that question. I'd like to look at precedents and see how that had worked elsewhere.
Q	Would a ballot paper that gave you two choices: one for a candidate and one for a party suit you better?
A	I would like that sort of choice.

Comment from panel

“I'd like to assure you that we do represent the socio-economic spectrum in the Citizens' Assembly. We run the gamut from very young to very old, and we cross all the socio-economic boundaries, as well as having representatives from all ethnic groups in the province.”

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Following this presentation a member of the audience had a question.

Q	You said that you couldn't vote for the party you liked – why don't you just vote for that party?
A	Well, for example with the current federal election, I would like to vote for a party that isn't one of the three major parties. But I'm concerned that one of the major parties that I don't like would get in if I did that.

SUBMISSION: NO