

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

DAWSON CREEK PUBLIC HEARING DATED
13 MAY 2004 AT NORTHERN LIGHTS
COLLEGE

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.

Polly Anne Mormon

BC Nurses' Union

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

Speaking in favour of MMP in BC.

KEY THEMES

Polly Anne Mormon expressed concern with the state of democracy in BC, including voter alienation, the distortion of election results under a FPP system, declining voter turnout, the under-representation of women and minorities, wild swings in policy and the adversarial political system. She advocated the introduction of an MMP electoral system, arguing that MMP is a more proportional system, will increase the social diversity of the legislature, will promote consensus policy decisions and ensure an effective opposition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Polly Anne Mormon reiterated the seven recommendations made by the BC Nurse Union in their submission to the Assembly.

- 1) That the Citizens' Assembly reject the current model of electing MLAs used in BC.
- 2) That the Citizens' Assembly bring forward the concept of PR as the centerpiece of proposed electoral reform in BC.
- 3) That in-depth consideration be given to the usage of an MMP system of PR in BC.
- 4) That the public be engaged in the Citizens' Assembly review of a possible MMP system of PR that could be used in the province of BC.
- 5) That a reasonable threshold for representation under a BC PR system be utilized.
- 6) That the number of MLA seats under a BC PR system be a fixed number of seats.
- 7) That the Citizens' Assembly recommend that a 50 per cent plus one, or a simple majority, be the measure utilized in the question regarding electoral reform that is put forward to British Columbians on May 17, 2005.

Quote: "We need to change to a system that is proportionally representative, to make every vote count and to make all votes equal."

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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

Q	You indicate that the number of MLA seats should remain fixed, what do you mean by that?
A	The number would remain static to keep an element of the system that is familiar and comfortable. This would also resolve any concerns about expanding legislatures and their related costs.
Q	Do you think that the possibility of coalition government would be worth while?
A	I think it would be a learning process, but I don't think anything is currently achieved by our head butting process. I think when people come and work together to find a common solution that could achieve much better legislation.
Q	But with PR you'll have people from a wide range of backgrounds, surely they will find it harder to work together?
A	I don't agree. I think having a range of people will make it a better debate.

Comment from panel: "We don't have any power to change the threshold required to pass the referendum."

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Following this presentation quite a few members of the audience had questions.

Q	How would your system deal with under-representation of people in rural areas. I think it may suit an equally distributed area rather than BC, with a great diversity in population?
A	It is certainly an issue for the assembly to consider. With a system that makes peoples votes count, more people in rural areas might be inspired to come out and vote.
Q	Who would make up the party lists in your system?
A	The Assembly would need to come up with the details of the system, but it wouldn't be party hacks.

Q	In this system what do you think would happen to party discipline, because in a party list system you would be voting for the party not the candidate.
A	In our system you would be voting for both, both for a candidate and for a party.
Q	Are you suggesting that a number of seats would be allocated on the basis of gender and race?
A	No, we're suggesting an inclusive system where people would not be excluded on the basis of gender or race, not that specific seats would be set aside.
Q	Are you suggesting an open or closed list?
A	Neither. I think that should be looked at by the assembly.

Comment: “There seems to be some suggestion that you could only have a proportional system or a geographical system. But I’ve heard about a mixed system, like the system in New Zealand where you could have both.”

SUBMISSION: NO