

CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY ON ELECTORAL REFORM

MAYOR CHRIS MOREY

PLENARY PRESENTATION

11 SEPTEMBER 2004

MORRIS J. WOSK CENTRE FOR DIALOGUE

Mayor Chris Morey
TOWN OF FORT NELSON
NORTHERN ROCKIES REGIONAL DISTRICT

Presentation to:

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As the Mayor of Fort Nelson and Chair of the Northern Rockies Regional District ... BC's most northerly community and one of it's largest regional districts, representing 10% of the province's land mass, but only 0.1% of its population ... it is my honour to speak to the plenary session of the Citizen's Assembly on the topic of electoral reform, to ensure that the voice of the North is heard. I would also like to extend our appreciation for my being chosen as one of the nine presenters to this esteemed body's plenary session.

Public hearings on potential changes to electoral boundaries in British Columbia were also held in Fort Nelson in 1988, and again in 1998. It has always been the concern of our region that IF substantial change is made to BC's electoral boundaries, that Fort Nelson and the Northern Rockies might end up with a lesser provincial representation.

The Northern Rockies Regional District is one of the largest regions in the province and within its boundaries, contains the one of richest areas in terms of natural resources. The oil & gas industry, forestry, BC's guide & outfitting industry, and an increasing tourism market are all activities which underwrite the economy of our region and which, more & more, underwrite the economy of the province as a whole.

The vastness of our region and of the electoral district it is part of, in comparison to the rest of BC, is remarkable; if electoral boundaries are made even larger, to encompass the entire northern region, Fort Nelson and the Northern Rockies will find itself very under-represented ... along with the other communities of the north-east in particular, and of the entire north in general.

Geography, communications, and fair & equal representation are factors which must be balanced in determining BC's electoral boundaries. Basing a decision on population alone would not be advisable or desirable for Fort Nelson and the Northern Rockies, or for the north as a whole.

We believe that a voting system of representation which provides for local representation with elected officials speaking for and answering to their distinctive areas is best, because each region has its own unique interests and problems, and "*one size fits all legislation*" or government does NOT always benefit those operating under that umbrella.

Whichever electoral system is used, we believe a "*seats won VERSUS votes won*" proportionality IS important to the province, because a proportional electoral system fosters a political environment that maintains and respects the values of contemporary British Columbians, and also provides for greater opportunity and influence by all citizens and parties.

Choices for constituents and adequate representation are integral for any electoral system; Fort Nelson and the Northern Rockies believes that sufficient & strong representation for the north, is essential and must be provided for.

Again, I thank the Citizen's Assembly for the opportunity to make this presentation and would be pleased to answer any questions you may have, or to add to my comments.
