

# PRESENTATION SUMMARY

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KAMLOOPS PUBLIC HEARING  
DATED 17 JUNE 2004  
AT THE COAST CANADIAN INN

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](http://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.

# Carole James

## New Democratic Party

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### DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

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Will outline the party's position on electoral reform – namely a more proportional system – and why the party is not recommending a particular form of PR.

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### KEY THEMES

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Carole James outlined the position of the New Democratic Party on the question of electoral reform. The BC NDP believes that the current single-member plurality voting system is severely flawed and must be replaced by a new, fair and workable system for electing MLAs. Ms James discussed the disproportional elections outcomes under the current system and explained that supporters of smaller parties are often left with little or no representation in the legislature or are forced to vote strategically. She also criticized the 'winner takes all' character of the system, resulting in extreme policy swings between governments. The NDP favours the adoption of a more proportional electoral system that also ensures significant local representation. Political equality, where all votes count equally, and voter choice are also important criteria for evaluating electoral systems. Ms James argued that electoral reform must take into account the unique characteristics of British Columbia, especially the representation of rural communities and remote regions in the province. She advised the Assembly not to choose an electoral system directly from another country but to design a made-in-BC solution for the province's unique political problems.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Carole James recommended the introduction of a more proportional electoral system that also ensures significant local representation.

*Quote: "In our view, a new electoral system must accommodate the needs of BC's diverse communities and preserve the strong regional representation that our province's unique geography requires."*

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### QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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One member of the panel sought clarification on elements of the presentation.

Q	In the section on voter choice you were talking about strategic voting as opposed to what other sort of voting?
A	Principled voting.

#### Comment from panel

There were no other comments from the panel.

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### QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

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

Q	There was a previous speaker that implied that PR would mean more unstable government, with elections every two years. What would be the cost of this?
A	I don't think the PR necessarily leads to unstable government and there a plenty of examples of stable PR systems from around the world.
Q	A significant amount of power is put into the hands of the Premier and the unelected policy wonks. How do we fix that?
A	I realize that that issue is outside the Assembly's mandate however I think there are a number of ways that we can increase the accountability of government. We need more regional decision-making and more citizen involvement in decision-making. This Assembly is an excellent example of that.

***Comment:*** There were no comments from the audience.

**SUBMISSION:** NO