

# PRESENTATION SUMMARY

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POWELL RIVER PUBLIC HEARING DATED  
15 MAY 2004 AT THE CEDAR ROOM, POWELL  
RIVER 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](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.

# Sasha and Ronnie Uhlmann

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## DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

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We need a voting system that accurately reflects voters' wishes. People are becoming disenfranchised with the voting system and no longer feel that they can vote for who they want for fear of a worse party getting elected.

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## KEY THEMES

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Sasha and Ronnie Uhlmann described the values that they consider to be important when evaluating a new electoral system. These include the sense that each vote counts, the proportional translation of votes into seats, continuity of legislation, more cooperation within the legislature, greater accountability for political parties, the capacity for voters to vote sincerely rather than strategically, and local representation. They are concerned about voter apathy and the adversarial nature of BC politics. For these reasons, they support the introduction of MMP.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Sasha and Ronnie Uhlmann recommend the introduction of MMP in British Columbia.

*Quote: "I want to be able to vote with my heart. I don't want to have to vote strategically. This is an inherent flaw in our current system."*

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## QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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

Q	I would like to hear you address the concern about the size of the ridings under MMP.
A	In the system that I have read about, they would just be increasing the ridings by one third. Also, it would be nice to group together regions that voted similarly. I think it's also important to me that we maintain our regional representation. A slight increase in the areas would be OK for me, because it would still retain this representation.
Q	I would like your opinion on the New Zealand system, where they have set aside a number of seats for Maori

	voters. How would you respond to that?
A	I think that would be wonderful. The First Nations aren't as represented in our government, so any system to get them involved would be wonderful.
Q	You mentioned that your friends from NZ were very proud of their system, do you know what in particular they liked about changing the system?
A	They felt more empowered because their vote made a difference. This encourages people to get more facts and to become more educated. Also, it's easier to support small parties and this would encourage young people to vote.

**Comment from panel:** There were no 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	In MMP, one of the representatives would be from a closed list, would that be a problem?
A	Well you could have an open list where the voters decide on the placement of people on that list. One concern is that a closed list would ensure more visible minorities whereas an open list would not guarantee that.
Q	Do you think that parties would use lists to represent minorities or do you think they would use lists to promote their own people?
A	I think an open list would help that for sure.
Q	Are you aware whether it is now a less adversarial system in New Zealand?
A	I didn't ask my friends from New Zealand that but it's a good question.

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

**SUBMISSION:** NO