

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

PRINCE GEORGE PUBLIC HEARING DATED
10 MAY 2004 AT THE PRINCE GEORGE
CIVIC 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.

Betty Abbs

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

The singular importance of geographic representation.

KEY THEMES

Betty Abbs emphasized the importance of geographic representation. She spoke against any attempt to make population rather than geography the basis of representation for Canadian governing bodies. Mrs Abbs argued that geographic representation is vital in order to ensure that the diversity of the province is reflected in the legislature. She argued that “fringe and fledgling parties” do not require legislative representation in order to be effective, but should instead focus their attention on local government. Mrs Abbs stated that the notion that any party has a “right” to a number of seats in the provincial legislature on the basis of having won a certain percentage of the provincial popular vote is “misconceived.” She argued that voter apathy is caused by the current electoral system, but by a range of other issues, including the rural-urban divide, lack of policy planning, a lack of quality political debate, and inadequate education on civic responsibility.

Quote: “Geographic representation, while not perfect, provides fundamental rights in a country with vast regional differences. As such, it must be protected.”

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

There were no questions or comments from the panel.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

There were no questions or comments from the audience.

SUBMISSION: NO