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Gentlemen:

My presentation to you on June 5, 2004 in Abbotsford stressed fairness in the way votes are applied.

Basically each M L A should be elected from a riding of equal numbers of potential voters.

I repeatedly hear that rural ridings want to continue the unequal advantage they presently enjoy.

Attached is a letter to the Editor, regarding the unequal and unfair Federal voting system, which enables ridings with few voters to elect members.

I do not know Russ Searle but, I share his views and include Provincial voting as being undemocratic.

Is my MLA more identifiable than a Peace Block or other rural MLA?

Your Assembly has some difficult and controversial decisions to make. Best wishes!

### **Westerners deserve an equal voice**

Your July 5 editorial writer misses the point. All I want as a western Canadian is an equal voice. When it takes about 19,000 people in Prince Edward Island to send someone to Ottawa, and 63,000 in B.C. to do the same thing, there is an inequity.

The Fathers of Confederation had it right: Every vote should be equal. Successive federal gov-

ernments have changed the rules to favour the East. Like justice, governance must not only be even-handed, but also must appear to be so.

RUSS SEARLE

Pender Island

## CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY

ON ELECTORAL REFORM

### Public hearings

The final Citizens' Assembly public hearing was held June 24<sup>th</sup> in Kelowna. During the 50 hearings, a total of 387 people made oral presentations, and many more members of the public made informal presentations, offered recommendations and comments, and asked questions at the sessions.

More than 2,700 members of the public attended hearings – including 50 in Smithers on the same night as the final game of the Stanley Cup playoffs!

Summaries of all presentations are on our website at [www.citizensassembly.bc.ca/public/extra/presentations/summaries.xml](http://www.citizensassembly.bc.ca/public/extra/presentations/summaries.xml)

### *Calls for change*

The most commonly heard call for change was for some form of **proportional representation (PR)**, in which the seats won in the legislature would more closely reflect the parties' share of the popular vote, either across BC as a whole or in regions.

Many who favoured PR, called for a form of **mixed member proportional (MMP)** representation. In MMP, some MLAs would be elected from geographical constituencies, while others would be selected from pre-published "party lists" of candidate names, to achieve the goal of seat-shares reflecting vote-shares.

While many presenters and speakers supported the principle of PR, there were often calls for restrictive "thresholds", ranging from 2 to 10 per cent of the vote. A party would be required to achieve the threshold level of the popular vote before being granted "list" seats. While thresholds limit proportionality, proponents argue that they exclude fringe parties.

Members also heard a number of detailed proposals for achieving PR through the use of the **single transferable vote (STV)**, in which voters use the preferential ballots to rank their choice of candidates.

Some tempered calls for **PR** systems with pleas that already large rural ridings not be further expanded to accommodate a new electoral system. Rural speakers in particular often added that having an identifiable "local" MLA is important to them.

Non-proportional electoral systems also received support. Some presenters advocated forms of the majority **system** in which MLAs must be elected by over 50 per cent of their constituents. The 50 per cent majority is achieved either using the preferential ballot (also called the alternative vote) or run-off elections.