

June 21, 2004

to: The Citizens' Assembly of Electoral Reform

from: Kim Nash
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I worked as a volunteer canvasser in the 2002 initiative to reform the electoral system in B.C.. At that time, although I had always been a voter, I had never involved myself in anything of a political nature. I was moved to do so by a sense of deep frustration over cutbacks being imposed by the provincial government. Since my husband is a public school teacher, I became particularly aware of what a negative impact these cuts were having on the educational system in B.C.

As a middle-aged person who has lived in B.C. since age 15, it also seemed to me that no matter what party gets elected, the first thing they do is dismantle all sorts of programs and initiatives that the previous ruling party organized. No party ever seems to want to admit that any other party has any ideas to offer. Since no one group can have all the right answers, this negative governing leads voters to swing back and forth, electing one party after another. This is no way to run a thoughtful, accountable, responsible government, or to take care of a province.

In addition, with the current first-past-the-post system,

the provincial governments we have been getting are not even truly representative of the wishes of the people because the percentage of votes each party gets does not equal the seats they obtain. This system is unfair to every group but in particular it is unfair to our children, who will inherit this province from us and have to deal with the mess that has been made.

I believe that most thoughtful people believe that every party has something to offer. I believe most reasonable people think both government and business have important roles to play. I also believe that most people want the way we elect our government to be FAIR, that is, truly representative of every vote in the province.

Voters also want leaders who have the long-term best interests of the province at heart, not leaders who are mainly concerned with power and how they're looking while they're in office. As a professional librarian who once worked for a major provincial government library, I was saddened by the amount of research being requested to bolster a particular, not always truly accurate, government point of view.

Certainly it is difficult for people of opposing parties to work together. On some things they may never agree. But for the long term health of the province they must work together. Compromise and consensus make stronger decisions than do dictatorships. Other smaller parties could also provide some valuable perspectives. I think in particular

of the Green Party, which I believe has many supporters scattered throughout the province but which has never held a single seat in the legislature.

I'm not very familiar with all the different electoral systems from which we might choose, but what I have read of the MMP system used in New Zealand sounds good. Proportional representation makes sense to me.

I understand Professor Ken Carty of UBC has been an advisor to the Citizens' Assembly. I was fortunate to take an excellent course in political science from him many years ago. I would value his opinion on this matter.

I appreciate the hard work that the assembly has done and is doing in attempting to find a better way for us to elect our government. It cannot be an easy task to understand all the choices and to choose a system. I am, however, convinced that any voting system that provides for more accurately translating votes into seats will mean more people will vote, less people will feel cynical about the government, better people will lead us, and B.C. will have a better and more stable future.

Thank you for asking for my input.

Sincerely,

Kim Nash