

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

TERRACE PUBLIC HEARING
DATED 8 JUNE 2004
AT THE COAST INN OF THE WEST

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 Geier

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

Strongly in favour of proportional representation. I also feel that citizens in large areas with scanty population and therefore miniscule representation have a hard time protecting resources, and I wonder what can be done about that problem.

KEY THEMES

Ms. Geier discussed the need for electoral reform in order to give a voice to those voters who otherwise go unheard. According to Ms. Greier, representation by population leaves large and diverse, sparsely populated areas underrepresented. The presenter argued that while parties view the system as a win or lose contest, the voters wish to see their needs expressed continuously and to play a part in the wise management of the resources in their areas. Ms. Geier expressed the opinion that rural areas suffer from a lack of reinvestment in the resource wealth that their ridings provide. The presenter stated that often policies conceived in urban areas have a strong negative impact on those living in remote areas. Ms. Geier argued that while people in urban ridings share similar needs and concerns, this is not true of the large rural ridings of BC. The presenter questioned how any representative can be expected to look after such diverse areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ms. Geier recommended electoral reform, preferably of a proportional nature.

Quote: I think we do need a better electoral system, and I hope that one focus of the Citizens' Assembly will be to come up with a way to ensure that the little voices from the big, far-away areas are heard.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

- Q Did you have any specific electoral system in mind?
- A I haven't yet. I have looked at the website however I'm hoping that you guys will come up with something good. I am in favour of change.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q Would you support a system that used square mileage to determine the size of constituencies?

A Yes. I grew up in the States where each state has two Senators regardless of the size. I would favour that, otherwise who is going to look after the resources? Who will look after the area?

Q What do you think about the idea of sub-MLAs for electorates that are so large that the MLA couldn't possibly cover them adequately?

A That might be a good idea I hadn't thought of it.