

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

VANCOUVER1 PUBLIC HEARING DATED
3 MAY 2004 AT MORRIS J. WOSK CENTRE
FOR DIALOGUE

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.

Adriane Carr

2002 Initiative to Establish Proportional Representation in BC

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

As the Proponent of a citizen's Initiative in 2002 under BC's Recall and Initiative Act, I will explain why I chose to advocate a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system similar to the one adopted in New Zealand as the one most suitable for BC. I will also relate what my volunteer canvassers and I learned in gathering over 98,000 signatures on the Initiative petitions and I will also suggest modifications to the original Initiative legislation which would help meet public concerns expressed during the Initiative process and which would make it meet the mandate of the Citizens' Assembly.

KEY THEMES

The presenter outlined the process for establishing a successful initiative under the Recall and Initiative Act and detailed the support garnered for the MMP Initiative 2002. The presentation emphasized the need for a fair electoral system in which votes cast are reflected by seats gained in the legislature; an element of local representation is protected; and the representation of minority groups is advanced. The existence of voter apathy particularly among youth was also noted as a concern.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The presenter recommended a change to MMP of a type similar to New Zealand's. Ms Carr stated that MMP would combat voter cynicism, increase rural representation and voter choice among the two types of representatives, and encourage a more consensual style of government.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

- Q How do you deal with the issue of increasing the size of rural constituencies in BC under the system you are suggesting?
- A One way you could handle it is by going with the model proposed by the Law Commission of Canada (LCC) that advocates a two thirds/one third split. That means that ridings would only be one-third larger than they are now.
- Q It seems to be that there must be a better solution than having a closed list for the top-up seats. Have you looked at the possibility of having more than

one candidate per region, or would that create adversarial politics in that region?

A I did talk to a number of people about STV, but it's my belief that most voters find it very hard to understand as a result of the complicated counting method. I think the way to handle closed lists is to put into law the requirement that parties use a democratic process and that should be clearly spelled out. I think people are very tired of not seeing democratic process applied by parties.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q One of the concerns I've heard from cabinet ministers and elected MPs is that there is a lot of friction that has arisen with the emergence of multiple parties, and the other thing I've heard from cabinet ministers is the difficulty in drawing up effective legislation when you are constantly trying to please many people ...?

A I found in talking to a variety of elected MPs that they felt that legislating was more effective, particularly through New Zealand's system of multi-partisan committees. Cabinet ministers might not like government legislation being modified to include different points of view, but from the point of view of effective legislation it does work.