# PRESENTATION SUMMARY

## VANCOUVER PUBLIC HEARING JUNE 12, 2004 AT MARRIOTT PINNACLE HOTEL

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.

# Nancy Klenavic on behalf of Jessica Clogg
# West Coast Environmental Law

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### DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

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Concerns with the current system and characteristics that a new system should have, from an NGO perspective.

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### KEY THEMES

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On behalf of West Coast Environmental Law, I support MMP. It is important to consider this non government organization's (NGO) perspective because of its contribution to democracy. NGOs often provide platforms to reflect citizens' views, with a unique perspective on societal needs. It is also important to keep in mind that NGOs are supported by citizens in a number of ways. The act of supporting an NGO is an appreciation of the work that they provide. The input is publicly driven, with no special interest agenda.

The primary problem with the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system is that it has a tendency to give rise to majority governments that do not reflect the popular vote. While it is often argued that majority governments allow for solid decision-making power and stability they are also disadvantageous for the following reasons:

1) Majority governments are able to forward a political agenda that does not reflect the interests and concerns of a majority of voters.

2) In BC, this has led to polarized politics in which parties represent different ends of the political spectrum. There are inherent problems with the system itself.

The second NGO concern with the current system is that representation is now solely based on geographic regions. Parties that have substantial but diffuse support due to their particular position on certain issues or overall philosophical approach are often unable to win seats. As a result, these parties and the electorate that supports them are inadequately represented, and some critical issues facing British Columbians may never even be given voice in the political system.

In addition, our current system effectively allows for a maximum of two parties to meaningfully participate in the legislature. Some groups with diffuse support, knowing they have little chance of ever being able to participate in the current system do not form parties at all. West Coast advocates a Mixed Member proportional system (MMP). Pure proportional representation does not retain local representation, while single transferable vote (STV) would require an undesirable increase in the size of electoral districts and Mixed Member Majority (MMM) would favour large parties. MMP gives rise to governments that more fairly represent the interests and views of citizens, and as such, is likely to facilitate NGO participation in governance.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

MMP.

> *"MMP gives rise to governments that more fairly represent the interest and views of citizens, and as such, is likely to facilitate NGO participation in governance."*

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### QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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| Q | To clarify, any system that has both Local Representation and Proportional Representation, would meet the wishes of the NGO. |
| A | Yes, that is the system we support. |
| Comment | I like the organization and your position. |
| A | Great, and this is an association. |
| Q | Does in its internal elections use PR? |
| A | Not sure. |
| Q | I was wondering if you feel that a changing our voting system would bring out people to vote? |
| A | Yes, I think personally, that if we change the system if we get the information out there, I feel that my vote would count more. |
| Q | I compliment you. Have you given any thought to the threshold? |
| A | We don't have a position on that, but from my research around 5% would seem reasonable. |