

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

VICTORIA PUBLIC HEARING DATED
10 JUNE 2004 AT THE WESTERN BALLROOM,
HARBOUR TOWERS

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

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

As the leader of the Green Party of BC I will explain why my party supports a change to a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) voting system for BC and our assessment of how MMP would positively impact voters (especially youth), political parties, election campaigns and the Legislative Assembly, I will also explain why the BC Green Party supports a closed list system in terms of delivering better representation for women and minorities, more transparent candidate selection, more cooperative politics, and better representation of both geographical constituencies and province-wide constituencies of interest.

KEY THEMES

Adriane Carr spoke in favour of a mixed member proportional representation voting system for BC. She argued that all political parties will benefit from a proportional system because every party has suffered from the vagaries of the current system, and that people will benefit from a system that will make their votes count. She expressed concern that Assembly members' negativity, cynicism and anger toward political parties will lead them to recommend a system that will weaken party control. Ms Carr argued that, while parties are not functioning very democratically, introducing a fairer and more proportional voting system will change political parties and governments for the better. She urged the Assembly to recommend an electoral system that will prevent parties winning artificial majorities, and that will give young new parties with fresh ideas a chance to be elected. Ms Carr argued that the most important issue that the Assembly should consider when evaluating electoral systems is whether the election outcomes and the legislative assembly – particularly which parties form government and opposition – accurately reflect the will of the people.

Ms Carr outlined the model of MMP favoured by the Green Party of BC. She recommended that:

- list seats be allocated to parties as a 'top-up' to ensure overall proportionality;
- the ballot be structured to give voters separate votes for a candidate and a party;
- the legislature be split as evenly as possible between constituency and party list seats or that at least one third of seats be reserved as party list seats;
- a preferential ballot be considered for the local constituency MLAs;
- the party list be a closed or flexible list;
- parties be required to use a democratic process to nominate all candidates and to register that process with Elections BC; and that
- an electoral threshold be set at 5 per cent of the party vote or one constituency seat in order for parties to be eligible for party list seats.

She concluded by suggesting that the majority of presentations at public hearings have been in favour of MMP because it is the most democratic system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Adriane Carr recommended the introduction of MMP in British Columbia.

Quote: "The MMP system is the most faithful and fair in translating the will of voters into election outcomes and the make-up of the legislative assembly, which is the fundamental goal of a democratic voting system."

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

There were no questions or comments from members of the panel.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Following this presentation quite a few members of the audience had questions.

Q	The recent Berger Commission Report to the City of Vancouver describes STV as the fairest electoral system and STV was also supported by Green Party. Why was that? Also, in terms of freeing your vote, isn't STV with increased voter choice the most free vote? A closed list isn't a free vote.
A	The Green Party supported STV in Vancouver because of the limited number of 10 seats in local municipalities but it doesn't work in a larger system. Also, most people want their first vote to count not their second or their third choice in the case of a province wide STV system. Multimember ridings with any less than 7 members still make it difficult for smaller parties to be elected. In a 6 member riding a party would need 14 per cent of votes to win. Most people aren't interested in ranking long lists of candidates, they're interested in freeing their vote for a candidate from their vote for party.
Q	Is there any role for independent candidates?
A	We hope that independent candidates would have more chance under MMP because people could vote for independent candidate in their constituency and then split their vote by voting for a different party.
Q	What level of threshold do you prefer?
A	We prefer a threshold of 4 or 5 per cent in the interests of stable government.

SUBMISSION: YES

SUBMISSION ID# 0635