

# PRESENTATION SUMMARY

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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](http://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.

# David Turner

## New Democratic Party

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### DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

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David Turner would like to address the issue of proportional representation, citing from his experience as Victoria Mayor and School Board Chair.

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### KEY THEMES

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David Turner introduced himself as the NDP federal candidate in this riding. He argued that the political system must balance the need for governments to work effectively with the need to respect rights of individuals and minorities. He criticized the current electoral system for placing too much emphasis on the former and not enough on the latter. Professor Turner told the hearing that the NDP supported electoral reform at both the national and provincial level. Even though the NDP has occasionally benefited from winning majority government under current system, it more frequently suffers from having fewer seats than its proportion of the vote. He commended the ten criteria for judging electoral systems developed by the New Zealand Royal Commission on the Electoral System: fairness between political parties, effective representation of minorities and special interest groups, effective aboriginal representation, political integration, effective representation of constituents, effective voter participation, effective government, effective parliament, effective parliament and legitimacy.

Professor Turner supported the introduction of proportional representation at the provincial and federal levels, in order to provide the same sort of flexibility that is currently experienced in municipal politics where majorities are formed on an issue by issue basis. He recommended the introduction of an open list PR system to allow voters to express a preference for candidates as well as political parties. Professor Turner also recommended that an electoral threshold be set at 3 rather than 5 per cent to ensure that elected representatives reflect the greatest diversity possible and to permit fledgling youth parties to become a viable political force. He expressed concern about low voter turnout among young people and proposed that the discussion of a wide spectrum of political views be encouraged in high schools, the provincial voting age be lowered to 16, and that PR be introduced to give people a sense that their vote could make a difference.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

David Turner recommended the introduction of open list proportional representation in British Columbia.

*Quote: "Many decisions in today's parliamentary system are made behind the closed doors of caucus rooms, and proportional representation holds the promise of bringing much of that debate into the open."*

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**QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL**

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There were two members of the panel who sought clarification on elements of the presentation.

Q	All forms of proportional representation involve some degree of multi-member districts. As a political candidate, how would you feel about that?
A	When I was the Mayor, there were a number of people serving the same district with a variety of views. It made far more interesting debate because we had to look at the intricacy of a wide range of issues.
Q	You discussed your experience in municipal politics, where individuals weren't necessarily representing a political party. But PR carries the danger of increasing the role of political parties, so I wonder how you reconcile the two?
A	There is more diversity in the legislature and it means that coalitions can be formed across party lines.

**Comment from panel**      There were no comments from the audience.

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**QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE**

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

Q	Do you have some view as to how this change to the system would affect independents? How could we see independents represented in the system?
A	I've only looked at some of the examples in the States and in New Zealand. In the States independent representation runs parallel to party representation. It allows people to combine their views, which reflects the complexity of our society.
Q	How optimistic are you that Canadian politicians can work together to make coalitions in a PR system?
A	I'm hopeful and optimistic because we need to look at methods for conflict resolution and mediation. One of my tasks as mayor was to bring competing interests together and I believe that we could do this at the provincial and the

	federal level.
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***Comment:*** There were no comments from the audience.

**SUBMISSION: NO**