

# 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.

# Rob Wipond

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## DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

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A new proportional representation system will revitalize democracy in BC and allow people to vote from their hearts.

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## KEY THEMES

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Rob Wipond criticized the gross distortion of election results under the current electoral system. He told the hearing that the electoral reform process was about revitalizing democracy in British Columbia to allow people to vote with their hearts, rather than voting strategically as they are compelled to do under the current system. He argued that this would bring the passion, vitality and heart back into political parties and voting.

Mr Wipond described his work as a freelance writer on social issues, where he gives voice to people who are often not heard in our society, such as homeless people, aboriginal social activists, and members of fringe political parties. He argued that these people do not have a voice in our current electoral system and described the people he had talked with as being excited by the prospect of electoral change. Mr Wipond argued that the province needs an electoral system that will give a voice to the minorities making up the Canadian mosaic. He explained that he is content to defer to the Assembly's final recommendation but personally favours the introduction of MMP adapted to maintain geographical constituencies for the majority of members because it is a simple system.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Rob Wipond recommended the introduction of MMP in British Columbia.

*Quote: "The current political system is a tyranny of the minority, and our current electoral system distorts the principle of equal rights for all."*

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## QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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There were no questions or comments from the panel.

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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	I don't really understand what a mixed member system is. Does that mean that MLAs have more authority to speak their mind?
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A	It can result in that, but that is an issue that is controlled by individual parties. A mixed system can bring a wider range of voices into the legislature which can erode party authority because parties need to form coalitions. There may also be a lot of independents that can be elected under this system.
Q	Political parties are obviously a core element of proportional representation. How does this system revitalize parties?
A	That's a good question. In an article that I'm currently working on, I made a table comparing the value statements of the four major political parties and they are identical. So I think a more proportional system will allow political candidates not to aim for the middle of the road. For example, the aboriginal population in BC has a lot of common concerns and with a PR system there is potential for these people to elect a representative to the legislature. It allows candidates and parties to take stronger stands on issues.
Q	You're familiar with some of the pro-rep systems that are out there. Do you have a preference between closed and open lists?
A	That's a difficult question that has to be looked at from a number of angles. At the moment I'm leaning towards the parties establishing their own lists. My feeling is that because we're giving people more power over which candidates get in with two votes that we can afford to let parties control this element of the system. In a way it would be nice to leave the decision up to parties as to whether they keep it open or closed.
Q	Could you be more detailed on the disproportionality of the current system?
A	For each individual candidate that wins in each riding all the votes that are for the other parties in that riding are wasted.

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

**SUBMISSION:** YES

**SUBMISSION ID#** 0268