

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

WILLIAMS LAKE PUBLIC HEARING
DATED 19 JUNE 2004
AT THE OVERLANDER HOTEL
CONVENTION CENTRE

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.

John Pickford

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

The merits and prevalence of proportional representation.

KEY THEMES

Mr. Pickford discussed the tendency of the current system to produce “wrong winners” and exaggerated majorities. The presenter stated that this imbalance in representation indicates the need for electoral reform in BC.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Pickford advocated the introduction of PR in order to increase voter turnout by countering the apathy which stems from individuals feeling that their votes don't count. In addition, Mr. Pickford argued that PR enhances the representation of women and minorities; enables the fair representation of the views of the citizenry; leads to greater cooperation among political parties; promotes issue rather than candidate oriented campaigns; discourages gerrymandering; and allows everyone's vote to count. Mr. Pickford discussed a number of variants of PR including closed list, open list, MMP, and STV. The presenter argued that PR is superior to the present FPTP system which allows for minority rule, that is, a government elected by less than a majority of voters.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

Q Do you believe that PR would create a minority government and is that important to you?

A Mathematically it could create a minority government but it could also create a majority government. People might argue that a minority government is not a bad thing as it forces parties to cooperate and no-one can force legislation through. I don't know if minority government is a value to be strived for, but I do not find it a scary thought. It is what the voters decide as every vote counts. You don't have a party that gains 53% of the vote getting 96% of the seats.

Q Can you be specific regarding which system of proportionality you favour, and according to what values?

A

I favour MMP as used in Germany where half the members are determined by FPTP in local districts and half are elected using PR with open party lists. STV is appealing to me too, although it is a complicated counting process, it promotes the election of independent and minority candidates.