

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

LILLOOET PUBLIC HEARING DATED
16 JUNE 2004 AT THE RECREATION 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.

Rod Webb

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

A discussion of the Pro-Rep Initiative in 2002.

KEY THEMES

Rod Webb discussed his experience as a Pro-Rep campaign canvasser in 2002. He found that just about everyone he asked was willing to sign the petition, and described the response as fantastic. He argued that the fact there were 4,000 canvassers and that nearly 100,000 signatures is indicative of the support across the province for MMP. Mr Webb supported the introduction of MMP but expressed concern that this will require enlarging the ridings. He argued that we need more representation in rural BC rather than less, and suggested that we should retain 79 constituency seats and then introduce additional compensatory seats. He argued that the requirement to not increase the number of seats in the legislature is a flaw in the Assembly's mandate. Mr Webb proposed that, if the assembly recommends change, the referendum should be held before the next election otherwise it will be far too long before the first election is held under a new system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Rod Webb recommended the introduction of MMP in British Columbia.

Quote: "We need more representation in rural BC rather than less!"

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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

Q	How would you feel if you lost your local representative here in Lillooet?
A	I wouldn't accept that. We need someone who is accountable to the local area and who can represent our interests in Victoria.
Q	I ask because you're an advocate of MMP, so how would you feel about losing your local representative?
A	As I understand it, with MMP you do still have a local representative but you have both a party vote and a local representative vote.
Q	But if your local constituency became 25 or 50 per cent larger?

A	That's why I think it's a flaw in the mandate to limit the number of seats to 79.
Q	So you're saying we should have 79 constituencies plus even more MLAs. Do you think the province would go for it at a referendum? It would cost a lot more.
A	Whether the people go for it or not would depend on how it was represented and whether the justification was explained.
Q	When you were involved in the pro-rep campaign there were really no alternatives offered to the people of BC. Would it be possible that if people had other choices, people might have preferred another sort of system that was different from MMP? If the Assembly came up with a system that wasn't MMP but addressed the problems you've raised, would you still be on board?
A	I'd have to look at it but I can't see why not. The MMP system we're proposing is basically the NZ model, so I'd be open to looking at a BC model that you guys could come up with.

Comment from panel There were no comments from the panel.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

There were no questions from members of the audience.

Comment: “You talk about MLAs being accountable – it seems to me that they’re far more accountable to the government than to the constituency. My MLA always seems to live in Chilliwack or Merritt.”

“We need to address the needs of our ridings and we also need to address the needs of minorities in our ridings. So I think that we need a system where 75 per cent of the MLAs were elected in ridings, but with the other MLAs to represent the minorities in our province. The minorities represent a significant point of view in the province. The other problem is the lay-out of the legislature where we’ve followed the British system by seating the parties in an adversarial manner. I think we should change the seating so that the MLAs are sitting next to people from other parties, and this would help to get away from the bickering and the in-fighting.

SUBMISSION: NO