



**Record of Proceedings
of the Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform
March 6 & 7, 2004**

Saturday, March 6, 2004 (AM Plenary Session)

In attendance: J. Blaney, Chair
 157 Assembly members
 8 staff
 13 facilitators
 40-45 observers
 2-3 media

Absent: V. Gowing, F. Hung (Saturday only),
 P. Gill

Recording secretary: L. Perra

R. Hall, M. Jarbek, W. Wong, H. Riemann, A. Hsu, S. de Luna, B. Carter led the Assembly in the singing of the National Anthem.

Opening remarks

- The Chair highlighted some of the results of the evaluations and the changes implemented on suggestions given. Special guests were introduced and notice given regarding guests in attendance at the next session of the Assembly. The Chair indicated that David Baxter, Urban Futures Institute would speak to the Assembly on Saturday afternoon, March 20 on the demography of the province.

Question Period

There being no questions, the Chair invited K. Carty to introduce the presenter for the Learning session.

Presentation: Choosing Electoral Systems – David Farrell

Following the presentation, questions on the following items were raised:

- Abrogation of laws in Italy
- Threshold numbers
- Impact of change on the political process
- Two classes of legislators (constituency and PR)
- Impact on local link to legislator in a PR system
- Factors driving change

The presentation concluded and Assembly members moved into discussion groups.

PM Plenary Session

Communication Strategy

M. Jacobson provided an overview of the communications strategy to promote awareness regarding the public hearings.

Public Hearings

L. Perra provided information to members regarding changes to their assigned hearings.

Presentation: The Impact of Electoral System Reform – Elizabeth McLeay

Questions on the following items were raised:

- Was an open list model considered?
- Did voter turnout increase with change to MMP system?
- How well did voters deal with the changed electoral system?
- Where do ministers come from: list or constituency?
- What happens if party wins more seats than popular vote?
- Basis of Maori votes

The presentation concluded and Assembly members moved into discussion groups.

Plenary Session: Round-up Question Period - K. Carty, D. Farrell, E. McLeay, C. Sharman

Some of the issues raised included:

- Limitations on number of seats, i.e. thresholds
- Does electoral system motivate voters?
- Effectiveness of government during period of change, coalition building
- Reaction to larger district sizes
- Policy shifts under MMP
- Impact of a closed versus open list
- How do parties differentiate themselves in a coalition?
- Why do people split their vote in a two-vote model?
- Why do the Irish support STV?
- Need for reserved seats in a PR model?
- Impact of reserved seats in New Zealand
- Impact of electoral systems on the quality of politicians
- Challenges faced in the New Zealand implementation

Sunday, March 7, 2004 (AM Plenary Session)

Announcements:

Poems by D. Byford to be placed on the web site, closure time for the hotel and availability of ferry schedules

Question period:

There being no questions, the Chair invited K. Carty to introduce the morning session.

Presentation: Preliminary Statement to the Province - K. Carty

Following a brief outline of the tasks for the morning the members moved into discussion groups.

Plenary Wrap-Up

Following the discussion period, the groups reported back on the strengths and weaknesses of the current electoral system.

K. Carty outlined the material to be covered for the next session.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:15 p.m.