

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

SMITHERS PUBLIC HEARING
DATED 7 JUNE 2004
AT THE HUDSON BAY LODGE

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.

William Miller

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

The benefits of proportional representation for the North and other rural areas of BC.

KEY THEMES

Mr. Miller expressed the opinion that voters of the north have always felt underrepresented; that their votes don't count; and that the representatives that they do elect are shut out when they are not part of the government. The presenter argued that this sentiment is reflected in increasing voter apathy and declining voter turnout.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Miller recommended the adoption of a system of MMP. Under the system advocated by Mr. Miller two-thirds of MLAs would be elected as local representatives (using the existing federal boundaries) and the remaining one-third would be elected as party candidates. The presenter advocated the implementation of a 5% threshold for party list members in order to keep the number of parties represented in the legislature to a workable number. According to Mr. Miller, the introduction of MMP would result in the fairer translation of votes cast into seats won, and by allowing voters to cast a ballot for an individual and a party both geographical areas and principles would be represented. According to Mr. Miller, this system would enable independents to run in for constituency seats. Further, parties would be required to select their list candidates in a democratic manner; however, they must ensure that they reflect the demographics and diversity of the population.

Quote: [MMP will provide] a style of government that expresses a cooperative approach to creating legislation; responsible governance that gives a slower but more thoughtful and sustainable approach to the issues that face us today; and an end to the destructive, combative politics of BC..

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

Q How do you feel about an electoral system where a third of the members will be elected by the party requiring the redrawing of the boundaries and the increasing size of constituencies?

A

I have given that a lot of thought and I am in favour of adopting the federal boundaries. I know those areas are large, but we will still have geographical representation and our concerns here do not differ significantly from those of Prince George. Further, we will have a member to address policy issues elected via the party list.