

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

BURNABY PUBLIC HEARING DATED
5 MAY 2004 AT HOLIDAY INN METROTOWN

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.

Andrea Wiebe

British Columbia Nurses' Union

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

Proportional Representation makes votes count and allows for fair and democratic representation. It is a superior electoral system to the Single Member Plurality or First Past the Post system currently in force in B.C.

KEY THEMES

The presenter argued the need for proportionality in the electoral system in order to increase the representation of women and minorities in the legislature; to prevent wasted votes and artificial majorities; to promote a consensus style of government; and to encourage greater voter involvement and turnout.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The presenter recommended a change to a MMP system with a reasonable threshold and a fixed number of legislative seats. A majority electoral formula with the alternative vote (AV) was suggested for the election of the constituency MLA's.

Quote: The lack of balance in perspective and experience in our provincial political elections and legislatures inevitably contributes to policies and initiatives that do not truly reflect the full diversity of our society.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

Q You refer to a fixed number of MLA seats, are you suggesting that we have a fixed number of list seats or the total number of MLAs?

A We think that one of the problems for the public is that they don't want to see increasing costs, so we feel that there should be a fixed number of both list and constituency MLAs.

Q Would you prefer a majority or a proportional system?

A A proportional system.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q I was wondering where your statistic that there was a 70% per cent support for PR in BC came from?

A This comes from Revitalizing Our Democracy: The NDP Framework for Electoral Reform.

Q Have you given any thought to the "None of the Above" option that ensures gender balance?

A We believe the most important thing is to create value around consensus and we believe that there is a lot of consensus around MMP. We have talked to experts, the experiences of other countries, and what the parties here in BC want. The Greens, the NDP, and the Liberals have all expressed favour for MMP and we want to build around that consensus.

Q Where did you get the figure of 50 per cent support for PR in BC in 1996? And regarding MMP, would you preclude candidates from running on both lists?

A We haven't gone into that level of detail on MMP, and that's why we feel that there should be more extensive debate. There are a lot of options out there. We think it's really important that we build more consensus and constructive debate into our political system and we feel that PR and specifically MMP are the best way to proceed in that regard.