

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

COQUITLAM PUBLIC HEARING DATED
1 JUNE 2004 AT THE EXECUTIVE PLAZA INN

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.

Drew Carmichael

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

I would like to speak in favour of a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system.

KEY THEMES

Drew Carmichael spoke in support of MMP. He explained that he would like to see more women and minorities elected and suggested that an MMP system with closed party lists would improve the representation of a diverse range of social groups. Mr Carmichael argued that parties would not abuse the selection process for party lists because lists would be published and they would be heavily scrutinized by the other parties. For this reason, parties will try to balance candidates from different regions, genders and cultural backgrounds. Mr Carmichael explained that he saw parties as being a necessary evil and argued that while non-partisan politics may be effective for city politics it is not appropriate at the provincial or federal level. He predicted that the introduction of MMP would lead to the election of more small parties, making it easier for a greater range of people to identify with a political party. He supported a five per cent electoral threshold to prevent fringe parties. Mr Carmichael also addressed the criticism that MMP will lead to more minority governments and therefore more frequent elections. He explained that under FPP minority governments may hold early elections in the hope of gaining a majority but that that would not be the case under MMP because governments would be aware that they could no longer count on winning false majorities and thus would have no incentive to call early elections. Mr Carmichael opposed the introduction of a Single Transferable Vote electoral system because he believed the ballot would be too complicated and lead to a greater number of spoiled ballots. He argued that simplicity is important in an electoral system in order to encourage more people to vote.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drew Carmichael recommended the introduction of MMP in British Columbia.

Quote: "We need an electoral system that will make our votes count."

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

One member of the panel who sought clarification on elements of the presentation.

Q	I've heard from British Columbians that regional representation is important. Would you prefer regional lists or one province-wide list?
A	I don't think regional lists are that important because I think parties will be concerned to make sure that their lists are regionally balanced. I also support the Law Commission's recommendation for flexible lists where you can indicate one preference for a candidate within the

	list or you can just vote for the party.
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Comment from panel: There were no comments from the panel.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Following this presentation quite a few members of the audience had questions.

Q	I think there are a lot of advantages to closed lists too, but would you put a quota in there so that parties have to have a certain number of people from different groups?
A	I don't think we'll need quotas because I think there will be a lot of pressure on parties to make sure that their lists are balanced.
Q	What are the differences between closed and open lists?
A	(Answered by facilitator) In an open list voters can select from candidates put forward on the list by parties. In a closed list the party selects the order of the candidates.

Comment: There were no comments from the audience.

SUBMISSION: YES