

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.

E. Brenda Flynn

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

The current voting system must change as our present system does not reflect how voters vote and leads to an adversarial type of government. Citizens' frustrations are reflected by increasingly lower voter turnout. I am in favour of a mixed member proportional type of voting system.

KEY THEMES

Brenda Flynn argued that we need to change the voting system because people are tired of not having their votes count, and this has led to voter apathy and declining voter turnout. She criticized the distorted electoral results at the last election and argued that such disproportionality contributes to falling turnout. Ms Flynn also opposed the lack of representation for women and minority groups in the Legislative Assembly because any legislation produced in these conditions does not reflect the diversity of society in the province. She also criticized the petty, adversarial behaviour of politicians and suggested that we should expect politicians to demonstrate more capacity to compromise and negotiate.

Ms Flynn supported the introduction of a PR electoral system, specifically the MMP model, because this would allow citizens to vote both for a local candidate and for their preferred party. She also proposed that the public be able to review the type of MMP system recommended by the Assembly. Ms Flynn favoured a retaining a fixed number of MLAs in order to address any concerns about the cost of electoral reform, and argued that the referendum threshold should be reduced to 50 per cent plus one. In conclusion, she urged the Assembly to recommend a system that would make every vote count, improve the representation of women and minority groups, encourage governments to seek consensus, and increase voter turnout, especially among young people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Brenda Flynn recommended the introduction of MMP in British Columbia.

Quote: "We need governments that are more focused on consensus-building and that are less adversarial."

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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

Q	Would you be against a regional list system?
A	I think representation at the local level is really important, but I need more information about any one system.
Q	The problem with a regional list system is that it's less

	proportional than a province-wide system.
A	I think the concerns of rural people also need to be addressed.
Q	But what's more important – rural representation or proportionality?
A	That's a good question and I don't envy you having to make that decision!

Comment from panel: There were no further comments from the panel.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

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

Q	How would the number of MLAs break down – would half be elected from lists?
A	At the last election, a proportion of votes did not count for anything and I think those votes need to be reflected.
Q	If you have regional rather than provincial lists, could you not have regional citizen assemblies to address those regional issues? Would that be an alternative to supplement a provincial list, to use more citizens' assemblies in those regions to resolve other issues?
A	(Answered by panel member) This assembly is costing the province \$5.5 million. In terms of whether this model could be used for other issues, I think the process has worked really well for this situation where we need to make an apolitical, neutral decision. Personally I think we elect a government to make the political decisions, whether we like it or not. So the assembly is useful for decisions that are apolitical. And I would like to assure everyone that the government has completely stayed out of this process – we've never seen members of the government at our meetings and no-one has put any pressure on our chair!

Comment: There were no comments from the audience.

SUBMISSION: YES