

# PRESENTATION SUMMARY

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DUNCAN PUBLIC HEARING DATED  
8 JUNE 2004 AT THE TRAVELODGE  
SILVER BRIDGE

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](http://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.

# Claire Gibbs

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## DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

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I will be going over the problems I perceive with the current first past the post system. I will advocate a system of mixed proportional representation with an emphasis on how this will empower voters (especially young voters) while still taking into account potential problems with such a system.

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## KEY THEMES

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Claire Gibbs discussed the disproportional election results experienced in British Columbia in 1991, 1996 and 2001 elections. She argued that these skewed electoral results are evidence that the current electoral system has failed the province. She advocated a mixed member system of proportional representation, along the lines proposed by the Free Your Vote Pro Rep society. She addressed two criticisms made of MMP: that it would bring an end to strong majority governments, and would compromise regional representation.

Ms Gibbs criticized the experience of strong majority governments in Canada as giving ruling party has no incentive to consider the views of the opposition. She cited Alexis de Tocqueville to demonstrate that such a system can lead to the tyranny of the majority, leaving the minority unrepresented, with their views disregarded. Proportional representation can restrain the tyranny of the majority by giving the minority a voice. Minority governments can increase discussion and compromise and slow down the passage of legislation because governments are required to consider all views.

Ms Gibbs also addressed the criticism that proportional representation requires abandoning regional representation by explaining that the Free Your Vote society has proposed increasing the size of ridings by only one third. She argued that the current electoral system represents each area as having a single political opinion and therefore leaves individuals who did not vote for MLA without representation. She proposed that it is as important to represent ideas as to represent geographical areas and predicted that PR would allow for greater diversity of rural opinions to be expressed. Ms Gibbs pointed to the experience of other countries with a PR electoral system where parties that have gained seats through party lists have opened offices in rural areas. By combining local representation with greater proportionality, she argued that MMP will give both urban and rural voters more voice. Ms Gibbs also explained that MMP will address the sentiment among young people that there is no point in voting if you don't support one of the two major parties by ensuring that more parties are represented in the legislature and therefore providing greater incentive for young people to vote.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Claire Gibbs recommended the introduction of MMP in British Columbia.

*Quote: “Our current system places too much emphasis on regionalism and not enough on democracy.”*

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#### QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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

A	Do you prefer open or closed lists?
Q	I support closed lists, but ones that are open to public scrutiny before the election.

#### Comment from panel

“I’m very impressed to see a young member of British Columbia stand up and come and make a presentation tonight. I hope that many more young people will make presentations to the assembly.”

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#### QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

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

Q	While it’s true that in recent years our MLAs may not have represented the regional interests of this community, a mix of representation of the broader picture of provincial goals and Canadian goals seem to be the mix that we want. Would PR not discourage the geographic link between members and their constituents?
A	In the system that the ProRep society is proposing only one third of MLAs are elected via party lists and two thirds are elected in constituencies. So yes, there will be a slight increase in size of ridings but I’m in no way suggesting removing that connection.
Q	I’ve thought for a long time that people should be able to express their first, second and third choices and that candidates should have to win fifty per cent of the vote plus one to be elected. I think that you could use this system with PR, where the first preference is considered to be the party vote. Also, I’d like to suggest the Nunavut system of government.

A	The drawback to the ranking of candidates is that it's quite a complicated option, so it's not the system that I prefer.
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***Comment:*** There were no comments from the audience.

**SUBMISSION: NO**