

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

FORT ST JOHN PUBLIC HEARING DATED
12 MAY 2004 AT THE QUALITY INN
NORTHERN GRAND

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.

Fran Lavign

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

Believes the current systems would work if it were a two-party system, but since it is a multi-party system, we need to change. I'm impressed with the mixed proportional representation, and will explain why.

KEY THEMES

Fran Lavign discussed the unfairness and disproportionality of recent elections, particularly the distortion of electoral outcomes in 1996 and 2001. She also expressed concern with decreasing voter turnout. Mrs. Lavign supports the introduction of an MMP electoral system because it is fair and better represents more people's votes. She explained that if MMP were introduced in BC, constituencies would need to be one third larger than their current size, however, she felt that this would be compensated for by the fact that each voter would elect both a local MLA and a proportion of MLAs from party lists. She argued that people will be encouraged to vote by a system which makes them feel that their vote counts. Mrs. Lavign also spoke of her experience collecting signatures for the 2002 PR petition campaign, and stated that, of approximately 1,000 local people that she approached to sign the petition, only six refused to sign.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Fran Lavign recommended the introduction of an MMP electoral system in British Columbia.

Quote: "Voters will be encouraged by a system that makes people feel that their votes count."

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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

Q	Do you think it would be acceptable if the huge riding that we now we have would be one third bigger in size?
A	It's my understanding that under MMP, each person would have two votes. So you could possibly have a second member working in the riding.
	(Response from panel member) Well it doesn't quite work like that. There's no guarantee that the list member would be working in the riding, they would come from a party list.

Q	What do you think about the size of our local regions as they are now. Does that pose any problems?
A	Yes, it certainly is a problem. This element of MMP does concern me, but it has been brought to my attention that under this system you would be able to vote for a local candidate and someone from the party list. In countries such as New Zealand, you could vote for a candidate from one party and a party list from another party. In that way, parties could open an office in our region, so you could have other people working in the riding in addition to the local member.
Q	Do you have any ideas about how we can attract more young people to vote?
A	Studies have indicated that having a more proportional system gives an impetus to a lot of younger people registering to vote and actually voting. This, I believe was the case in New Zealand. Apparently there is documentation of more young people actually voting.

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	What is your opinion of having a system where a rural riding was increased by a third, but urban ridings were made even bigger, say they were doubled?
A	My understanding is that all constituencies would be increased by one third.
Q	But what if wasn't all increased by a third, what if some were made different sizes because of the difference between urban and rural?
A	Well that's intriguing, but the system that I'm proposing would have equal increases.
Q	I wondered if it would be helpful if the school system would implement a course that dealt with our democracy. Do you think that would be a good way to increase interest?

A	I'm sure it would be helpful. It sounds like something that should be taught in schools.
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Comment: “There is a new course called civics being introduced in Grade 11 social studies.”

SUBMISSION: NO