

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

GRAND FORKS PUBLIC HEARING
DATED 10 MAY 2004
AT SELKIRK COLLEGE

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.

Barbie Kalmakoff

BC Nurses Union

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

A presentation on behalf of the BC Nurses Union in support of proportional representation.

KEY THEMES

Ms. Kalmakoff commented upon the outdated nature of the current FPTP system in BC. The presenter referred to the problems of exaggerated majorities, wrong winners, and wasted votes as leading to voter apathy and declining voter turnout. Ms. Kalmakoff further noted the absence of minority voices in the legislature and the need for electoral reform to create a system that is more reflective of the views in the population.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ms. Kalmakoff recommended a move to a PR system in order to improve the representation of women and minorities; to make every vote count to improve voter turnout; to promote a consensus style of policy making in the legislature; and to heighten the accountability of MLAs between elections. Ms. Kalmakoff expressed her support for the submission made to the Citizens' Assembly by the BC Nurses Union. In particular, MMP was proposed as the type of proportional representation viewed as most desirable for BC with a reasonable threshold, a fixed number of constituency seats, and a majoritarian electoral formula using the alternative vote (AV) for the election of local MLAs.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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| Q | Under MMP do you think that we would get more minorities and young people running for office? |
| A | I think that we would. Studies in New Zealand have shown that that can occur |
| Q | So you think that more of them will get out and vote? |
| A | I do. I think at the next election the youth will come out to vote on this referendum |

Q Do you think that the public would go for minority governments?

A I think that people would much rather see that than a government where you have a party that got 54 per cent of the vote controlling 97 per cent of the seats

Q How did you come up with MMP? Because of the New Zealand system or are there other forms of PR you have thought about?

A When MMP first came out I didn't understand how it would work and I thought that I would be excluded in a rural area. But having gotten out I realize that this is a good system as studies in New Zealand have shown. I have children and I want them to vote in the future and feel that their votes count.

Q Are you comfortable with the parties deciding who the candidates on the party list will be?

A I am because I think that they will be careful about who they put on their lists. They are going to be looking at gender and ethnicity and trying to get a balanced slate of candidates.

Q What of the problem of less desirable politicians coming back?

A They come back under this system anyway.