

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

LANGLEY PUBLIC HEARING
DATED 20 MAY 2004
AT THE HAMPTON 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.

Andrea Welling

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

A discussion of the disadvantages of our current system. I will recommend the Assembly focus on a proportional system called mixed member proportional (MMP).

KEY THEMES

Ms. Welling discussed her involvement as a candidate and an activist within the Green Party. The presenter discussed the problem of youth apathy and alienation, arguing that it stemmed from the unfair translation of votes into seats and the concomitant creation of wasted votes under the current FPTP system. Ms. Welling stated that under PR the Green Party would have secured six or seven seats with 12% of the vote at the last provincial elections. However, under FPTP they received no representation and this not only impacts psychologically on voters, but also ensures that minor parties will enjoy only limited resources and therefore struggle to build an organization. Concern was also expressed over British Columbia's polarized party system which produces voter cynicism. Furthermore, Ms. Welling discussed the preeminence of the major parties in the electoral process as a result of the role that money plays in the campaigning process. The presenter discussed the positive response she received from the public regarding a potential change to a PR system as a volunteer for the Pro Rep initiative of 2002.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The presenter recommended the adoption of MMP on the grounds that it enables the continuation of local representation while introducing an element of proportionality into the system. Ms. Welling contended that MMP will enable the fair translation of votes into seats, thereby tempering voter apathy and alienation as all votes will count.

Quote: We need a system that allows citizens to feel that being involved in politics is worthwhile and can accommodate their diverse views. It is my belief that our current system is a 19th century model trying to represent 21st century realities and it doesn't work.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

Q What is your reference to the term "youth" in regards to the figures you cited regarding voter turnout?

A 18-24.

Q Have you concluded how many ridings there would have to be under your system of MMP to maintain local representation while providing for proportionality?

A You would need to have fewer ridings. Regarding the role that list members could play, the list members could be the secondary members, taking up issues in certain regions. Some rural ridings may feel that they would lose some representation. It would be a change but, I think it would be well worth it.

Q How do you feel about different systems for different parts of the province?

A I don't favour that. I think that we need something that is easy to administer and easy to organize. If you are one person in this country you should get one vote. I don't believe in greater representation for rural constituents.