

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

NANAIMO PUBLIC HEARING DATED
27 MAY 2004 AT COAST BASTION HOTEL

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.

Jim Erkiletian and Janette Briere

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

Requesting some form of proportional representation.

KEY THEMES

Jim Erkiletian and Janette Briere began their presentation with a short song on the benefits of proportional representation. Both presenters told the hearing that they had been involved in Proportional Representation petition campaign in 2002. Mr Erkiletian described the Canadian political system as incorporating elements from the three founding cultures: the First Nations, the English and the French. He cited the political scientist Arend Lijphart as demonstrating that multicultural societies, such as Canada, are better suited to ‘consensus’ electoral systems, such as PR, than ‘majoritarian’ systems such as FPP, because a multicultural society is not effectively represented by a two party system. Mr Erkiletian told the hearing the Lijphart acknowledges that consensus systems may be less efficient, but argued that Canadians value freedom more highly than efficiency. He advocated the MMP electoral system as more appropriate for British Columbia because the system is more compatible with a multi-cultural society and ensures that the cultural diversity of the province will be reflected in its political institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Jim Erkiletian and Janette Briere recommended the introduction of MMP in British Columbia.

Quote: “In a multicultural society the Majority system can often be more unstable than a Proportional system because the society is not reducible to a two-party ideology.”

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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

Q	What kind of a threshold would you like to see?
A	I’ve heard suggestions for five per cent, but I’d personally suggest a zero threshold.
Q	Why MMP as opposed to pure-PR?
A	Because under MMP a person gets to vote twice, and I think that’s a good idea because there’s a range of people running for office so more votes seems better to me.
Q	In terms of the impact of a PR system on efficiency, what do you think about the possibility of taking a couple of months to form a government, given the chance of a

	minority or coalition government?
A	We've seen the positive experience of a Trudeau minority government and even Trudeau recognized the benefits. That government brought us unemployment insurance and better hospitals. Canada is a very stable country so I don't think there's a lot of risk involved in minority or coalition governments.

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	The history of democracy is one of evolution, such as the extension of the franchise, but it seems to me that democracy is still not reaching the levels that are possible, so do you think PR might be a further evolution of democracy?
A	I'm not sure if it's always a further evolution. I think it would be in Canada, but I think it may not be appropriate in other countries. But here I think it would be ideal.
Q	How has NZ benefited from mixed PR?
A	Well voter turnout increased significantly, and youth became more involved and I think that would probably happen here and be positive here. The New Zealanders I've spoken to seem to like it.

Comment: There were no further comments from the audience.

SUBMISSION: NO