

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

NELSON PUBLIC HEARING
DATED 11 MAY 2004
AT THE PRESTIGE LAKESIDE RESORT

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.

John Alton

West Kootenay Eco-Society

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

I wish to give my personal experience of how the present system is not working for me. I will also say why I feel a proportional system would work better.

KEY THEMES

Mr. Alton expressed his disappointment with the difficulty experienced by parties supporting environmental issues to gain legislative representation despite receiving a significant share of the vote. The presenter state the view that the current FPTP system favours the two large parties to the exclusion of minor parties, and hence environmental issues, largely as a result of strategic voting on the part of citizens. Mr. Alton outlined how yo-yo policy making had damaged the province in terms of the provision of environmental policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The presenter recommended MMP in order to temper adversarial politics, and to increase accountability in government. Furthermore under MMP, there would no longer be the problem of splitting the vote on the left between the Greens and the NDP. A proportional electoral system would make parliament more representative and stable across time.

Quote: Obviously our democratic system is failing us as it is subject to the control of those with money and power. Adopting MMP will give some of that control back to the grassroots.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

- Q Do you think an MMP system would produce a bunch of radical parties?
- A I understand that often MMP systems have a five per cent threshold, so that could be in place. You could easily set up a threshold so you don't have everyone starting up a party.
- Q Have you looked at other PR systems in other countries?

A I have looked through the other systems but I didn't see anything in there that would really give much representation to the smaller parties.

Q It doesn't seem that local representation is as important to you as general proportional representation, is that accurate?

A I think that both can be good.

Q Regarding environmental issues would you prefer MMP over another PR system that would enable greater support for a party such as the Greens?

A I can't really answer that. As long as there is a proportional result that is all I'm concerned about, if the Greens get twenty per cent of the votes they would get twenty per cent of the seats.

Q How many members do you see in each riding?

A I think there was a proposal that we could adopt the federal ridings and then we wouldn't have to increase the number of MLAs.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q When you have a party system and you have the party appointing an MLA to a riding it promotes the party system, but the people in the riding have an appointee rather than that person being elected. Isn't that a concern?

A The list could be arrived at democratically through elections within the party so it doesn't have to be an appointment.