

# PRESENTATION SUMMARY

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NEW WESTMINSTER PUBLIC HEARING  
DATED 6 MAY 2004  
AT THE INN AT WESTMINSTER QUAY

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](http://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.

# Terry Julian

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## DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

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Advocating a single member plurality system because it maintains a strong party system.

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## KEY THEMES

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Mr. Julian discussed the potential problems that electoral reform of a proportional nature would create including: a splintering of the party system; the production of unstable governments; the opportunity such systems provide for extremist parties; possible negative impact on voter participation; the geographical difficulties of representation under PR; and the increased likelihood of coalition government.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The presenter recommended the retention of the current SMP system on the basis of the complications that a shift to a PR system would entail.

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## QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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- Q            Could you comment on the contention that consensus government may provide for more open government?
- A            Can you imagine 15 parties in Victoria trying to pass legislation and govern this province, it would be chaos!
- Q            What is your feeling regarding party discipline under SMP and electoral systems more generally?
- A            Parties are essential in a democracy, and if they are essential then there must be party discipline. They have a caucus and they can disagree as much as they like in caucus but they must reach a common decision, there must be a common trust. That's not to say that there shouldn't be free votes in the legislature, but the party has to be unified.
- Q            You mentioned the importance of clarity, simplicity and choice, how important is simplicity in the electoral system to you?
- A            There was all sorts of confusion under social credit with preferential voting. Simplicity is crucial, and SMP provides a very simple system.

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QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

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Q            Would you say that all of your critiques of PR systems hold for each of the members of the PR family?

A            I disagree with your premise. SMP is very different from any type of PR system. I criticized PR because I don't believe in it but there is disagreement between the people that are advocating PR as there are so many different systems.

Q            We have the system you are advocating and the title of your book is "Improving Canada's Democracy", so can you comment on how we can improve democracy in Canada?

A            I think that all people need to make politics a part-time profession. You should join a party, you should contribute to that party, and work for the candidate who is running. I'm very opposed to candidates and members that jump parties.

Q            We don't have a democracy here in BC right now, we have no opposition, I would like to know why you didn't draw examples from countries such as Australia that have successfully used PR?

A            I agree the lack of opposition in BC is a problem. There is a lot of controversy over this. They took a poll in NZ after the implementation of MMP there and public opinion had reversed.