

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

NORTH VANCOUVER PUBLIC HEARING
DATED 2 JUNE 2004
AT THE LONSDALE QUAY 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.

Alison Watt

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

A presentation in favour of changing the electoral system in BC.

KEY THEMES

Ms. Watt discussed what she felt were the unattractive features of the current system including the lack of proportionality (occasionally resulting in the party that gained fewer seats gaining control of the government as occurred in 1996), exaggerated majorities, government dominated legislatures, wasted votes, disillusioned voters, constituencies of vastly different sizes, strategic voting, and minimal voter choice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The presenter recommended adopting a system of MMP similar to that used in New Zealand in order to allow for some local representation and a measure of proportionality. Ms. Watt also recommended the introduction of a 3% threshold. According to Ms. Watt, the introduction of such a system would: enable the representation of more views in the legislations; make citizens feel that their votes count; moderate pendulum politics; and encourage the production of minority and coalition governments, engendering a more consensual style of governing. Ms. Watt also noted that any electoral reform needs time to take effect and people should have realistic expectation of what such a change can accomplish: electoral reform will not cure all the problems in politics in BC. The presenter also stated the need to retain the practice of physical, rather than electronic voting, even if the ballots are counted electronically, as we should keep a record of people's vote for verification.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

- Q Have you given any thought to the number of seats that should be allocated to each level under your system of MMP?
- A I think that we could go with the number of seats we have now and adopt the federal ridings for the constituency seats. This would be an economical option and would minimize the confusion on the part of the voters.
- Q Have you given any thought to the geographical size of constituencies being considered as a factor

mitigating this need for vote equality?

A Local and rural representation is important, but we also have greater technology these days and under MMP there is a greater likelihood of having access to a member of your political persuasion.

Q How would you address the different roles of the two types of members under MMP?

A This has been a problem already in New Zealand. My suggestion is that you do have to treat them equally and hopefully they would all be given set responsibilities so that you wouldn't have those zombie politicians.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q You propose that we look to the New Zealand system however this is the one mixed member system that doesn't have regional lists. Would you consider the introduction of regional lists?

A I could be persuaded. I think that is an issue, and if the Citizens' Assembly thinks that that is the way to go then I'm all for it.