

# PRESENTATION SUMMARY

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PENTICTON PUBLIC HEARING  
DATED 23 JUNE 2004  
AT PENTICTON 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](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.

# Cass Robinson

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## DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

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A presentation in support of mixed member proportional representation.

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## KEY THEMES

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Ms. Robinson expressed the opinion that most British Columbians are uncomfortable with the way that votes are translated into seats in the legislature. Further, Ms. Cass stated that British Columbians are a fair-minded and tolerant lot, who do not hold a black and white view of the world by nature. The presenter argued that democracy in BC, and elsewhere, should not constitute a win/lose proposition, but rather should reflect the diversity inherent in our society. Ms. Robinson stated that while consensus and compromise are coming to be appreciated in Canadian culture, neither of these values are embodied under the current electoral system which excludes many voices.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The presenter recommended the adoption of MMP. According to Ms. Robinson, MMP would ease the discontent felt by Canadians as a result of the unfair translation of votes into seats. In addition, Ms. Robinson argued that the introduction of MMP would not lead to government instability, as the New Zealand example demonstrates. On the contrary, the presenter stated that MMP would have a calming effect among the citizenry as voters would be assured that their concerns will be aired in the legislature. Under this system, minor parties may gain representation if they can garner 5% of the vote province-wide. Ms. Robinson argued that this would open up the political system to small groups that have been shut out by the dominance of large “special interest” groups that exert influence through the major parties, usually through financial donations.

*Quote: In the name of fairness and equality, I urge you to recommend MMP which builds on the strengths of our present system and enhances the democratic spirit of British Columbians.*

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## QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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- Q           What is the background of the “Raging Grannies”?
- A           The Raging Grannies were formed in 1982 as a group of grannies who objected to the Americans bringing in warships without being willing to state if

there were nuclear weapons on board. It is primarily a protest group. We don't belong to any party; in fact we are equally opposed to all parties.

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QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

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Q How does MMP operate?

A Under MMP, as used in New Zealand, when you go to the ballot box you have two votes, one for the candidate as it is now under FPTP, and the second vote is a party vote. This allows you to vote for your favourite candidate and your preferred party. Therefore, the physical candidate will have a seat, and the party will gain seats on the basis of their support province wide. This will give voices to small parties that are currently excluded under FPTP.

Q Are you advocating an equal number of seats for the ridings and the party seats?

A The panel will have to deal with that. The system I would recommend is to have ridings along the lines of the federal boundaries, with 38 ridings, and have two seats for each of these ridings, one for the local MLA and one for the party list member. However, this group is unable to alter the number of seats in the legislature so they would have to deal with this difficult issue.

Q Did the change to MMP in NZ increase the size of the legislature?

A I don't know if they have increased the number of seats in the legislature. They have had this system for three elections and they haven't changed the size of the legislature over this time, but I am not sure if the number of seats changed when they moved from FPTP to MMP.