PRESENTATION SUMMARY

POWELL RIVER PUBLIC HEARING DATED 15 MAY 2004 AT THE CEDAR ROOM, POWELL RIVER RECREATION CENTRE

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.

Andrea Goldsmith
Green Party of Canada

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

I will provide reasons why an MMP voting system, similar to the one proposed by the Canadian Law Commission for federal elections, is suitable and desirable for BC. I will also advocate that the voter age be lowered to 16 years of age.

KEY THEMES

Andrea Goldsmith argued that electoral reform can better serve democracy if reform makes it easier for the average citizen or for newer parties to contest elections because BC politics needs new ideas and new blood. Ms Goldsmith outlined a number of reforms recently instituted by the federal government, including maximum limits on donations to political parties, reimbursement of a proportion of candidate campaign expenses, and government funding for political parties between elections, and suggested that these also be introduced in BC. She also recommended lowering the voting age to 16 or 17 so that young people could have access to support and political education from schools when they cast their first vote. Ms Goldsmith advocated the adoption of MMP in BC, using the model recommended for federal elections by the Law Commission of Canada. She argued that MMP balances geographical and political representation, ensures an effective opposition and prevents extreme policy swings. She also recommended more free votes with the legislature.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Andre Goldsmith recommended the introduction of MMP in British Columbia.

> *Quote: "It is time to update the political system which entrenches the power of older parties. We must adopt a truly democratic, inclusive and representative electoral system. We need to reinvigorate democracy."*

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

A member of the panel sought clarification on elements of the presentation.

Q	Do you really feel that kids at the age of 16 are mature enough to be voting?
A	I think that we underestimate the intelligence of our younger people and they also have to live with the

	consequences of the government. You miss out on the opportunity to support and educate young voters if they're out of school by the time they vote. We allow 16 year olds to drive.

Comment from panel: There were no comments from the panel.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Following this presentation quite a few members of the audience had questions.

Q	How does your community feel about local representation in terms of having a larger riding?
A	I see that there's a trade-off. I think that there are ways to reallocate boundaries or add more seats. Even when ridings are small as they are now, people don't feel represented. People may feel that it's more important to be politically represented and have someone in the legislature who represents your political views.
Q	You're suggesting political teaching in school. Is there currently political education in schools, and could there be any problems with that?
A	I haven't researched to know what the political curriculum is. As a candidate it's very difficult to access schools because they want to make sure they're non-partisan, which I acknowledge as important. The danger is that in doing so, they also make school apolitical and students don't really know a lot about politics. Students need to know how the system works and why it is important to vote.

Comment: "As a retired high school teacher, we tell Grade Ten students that we trust them to drive when they are 16 but yet in a school system it is hard to convince students that their opinion is valued."

SUBMISSION: NO