

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

RICHMOND PUBLIC HEARING DATED
4 MAY 2004 AT THE VANCOUVER AIRPORT
MARRIOTT HOTEL, RICHMOND

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.

Gretchen Harlow

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

I will talk about the Pro-Rep campaign in Richmond two years ago.

KEY THEMES

Gretchen Harlow collected signatures for a petition supporting proportional representation in 2002.

While some of the people she approached to sign the petition were content with the current system, a large number of people spoke of the need for electoral reform following the last election.

People felt that they did not have a voice in government. A number of people did not vote because they had been alienated by the government or by a particular event.

Ms Harlow suggested that Assembly members consider the recent recommendation of the Law Commission of Canada to introduce MMP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Gretchen Harlow recommends that a PR system be adopted in BC. In particular, she recommends a 'made-for-BC' MMP system.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

There were two members of the panel who sought clarification on elements of the presentation.

Q	Why MMP?
A	Because there is a mixture of both party members and local geographical members. People are concerned about geographical representation, so this system would meet the needs of BC.
Q	You mentioned that some people were content with the current system. Do you have a sense of what people like about the current system?
A	It's familiar and it has direct local representation. But I think the last ten years have demonstrated the dangers of the system, particularly the extreme swings between voters.

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	Perhaps it is more important to encourage people to vote?
A	I was collecting signatures for a petition on proportional representation so I didn't really speak to people about that.
Q	MMP requires much larger ridings, which is OK for Richmond but is not good for the Peace Country, for example. Also, how would we keep MLAs who are elected via the party accountable?
A	I understand that it is possible only to enlarge rural ridings by a small proportion rather than a large amount. I really feel that it is important to change the current system.
Q	What do you think of a system where candidates are elected using parties, but once they are in the legislature they serve the riding rather than the party?
A	It sounds like something that the Assembly should look into.
Q	Do you have any idea how many people refused to sign the petition?
A	No.

Comment: There were no comments from the audience.

SUBMISSION: YES

SUBMISSION ID# TO FOLLOW