

# PRESENTATION SUMMARY

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SALT SPRING ISLAND PUBLIC HEARING  
DATED 19 JUNE 2004 AT LIONS' HALL

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.

# Carol Donnelly

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## DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

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Our Canadian disproportional electoral system and working towards a solution to the problem.

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## KEY THEMES

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Carol Donnelly described a major problem with the plurality system as being its disproportionality. She also argued that there is a strong regional bias in the distribution of seats under the current system. Ms Donnelly criticized the BC legislature for its chronic under-representation of women. She argued that several factors were involved in women's under-representation, including the necessity for most women to work to support their families, the candidate nomination process, and the lack of education on the importance of the electoral system. Ms Donnelly noted that ethnic minorities are under-represented in the legislature, especially First Nations people. She supported the adoption of a majoritarian electoral system in British Columbia, with some modifications. She proposed that the winning candidate in any riding should need to win 55 per cent of the vote, rather than 50 per cent plus one which is standard in majoritarian systems. She also proposed that if no candidate succeeded in winning a majority in the first round, then the top three, rather than the top two, candidates should go forward to the next ballot. Ms Donnelly argued that a run-off system was more fair and less cumbersome than the Alternative Vote system, and that it also gave voters the opportunity to cast a more informed vote on the second ballot. She acknowledged that this system does require a longer voting period but predicted that voters could easily adapt to this. Ms Donnelly recommended that 50 per cent of all seats in the BC legislature should be reserved for women and explained that this could be introduced gradually over a period of three to four elections. She advised that infrastructure and education programmes should be introduced to provide more women with the time, ability and opportunity to run for political office. Mrs Donnelly also recommended that 25 per cent of all legislative seats be reserved for ethnic minority candidates, and at least 4 per cent reserved for First Nations men and women. These proportions could be adjusted over time to match population changes.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Carol Donnelly recommended the introduction of a majoritarian run-off system in British Columbia.

*Quote: "Using a majority run-off system, the electorate would have the opportunity to know the candidates they are voting for which would, hopefully, result in a more informed vote being cast than would happen in the party-list system."*

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## QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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

Q	How do you reserve seats or minority groups within the legislature?
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A	You would set a percentage of seats that have to be filled by women or other groups and then the parties would have to find the candidates to fill these seats.
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**Comment from panel**      There were no comments from the panel.

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**QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE**

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

Q	When you're reserving seats for women, do you take into account ability or just numbers?
A	Of course ability would be very important. The party would want to stand female candidates who would be able to win those seats. Although we seem to have plenty of males in the legislature who aren't very able.
Q	I think our dilemma is how to choose the women to be in the legislature. What do you think about working with non-governmental organizations?
A	I think that's a very good suggestion but then I'm biased because I've worked in non-governmental organizations all my life. Eventually I would like to see us get rid of the party system.
Q	As I see it, the only way you could achieve that is to have constituencies that can only stand women candidates because otherwise you're taking away the democratic process.
A	I know there are a lot of problems with my suggestion, which is why I would introduce this gradually. But I strongly feel that we need to have more women, and more First Nations and more ethnic minorities in the legislature.

**Comment:** "I'm aware of one country, I'm not sure which one, where each riding has one female and one male candidate. Maybe we should try that in BC."

**SUBMISSION: NO**