

CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY SUBMISSION

I want to express my thanks (and amazement) that the government has convened such a clearly democratic Citizens' Assembly on this most important issue. I also extend my heart-felt gratitude to each of you 161 extraordinary "ordinary citizens" who have been willing to take on this complex and time-consuming job.

I worked for the proportional representation referendum, and I continue to support a mixed system along with constituency representatives. The proportion of 2 constituency reps to one "party list" rep seems good to me.

As a rural resident, I'd much rather increase the number of MLAs than increase the riding size to encompass approximately 50% more people each.

If a party can prove that it allowed all its members to vote on its list members and their order without undue hardship, I'd allow it to use a "closed" list. Otherwise I prefer requiring party lists to be "open".

Further to lists, I'd like 2 per party, one for women and one for men, to be used to achieve (hopefully) gender balance in the legislature. Everyone gets to vote twice, once for each gender's list, but the 26 "party list" MLAs get selected to equalize the legislature to 50% of each gender, just as the Citizens Assembly has been gender balanced.

I also favor guaranteed seats for First Nations people equal to their proportion of the B.C. population. As in New Zealand, aboriginal people could choose to vote on their ethnic poll or the regular one, or both with their vote counting only one-half in both election counts. Surely we could simply add this number of representatives to the legislature rather than (perhaps once again) increasing the size of ridings.

I would like a threshold of between 3-5% for a party to be allowed to have "list" candidates, or they could be required to run candidates in at least 20-25% of the ridings.

I have my doubts about the mechanism to vote on any changes you recommend. The requirement for this vote to pass seems very stringent to me: 60% of those voting plus 50% of at least 60% of the electoral districts. After working for both the prorep referendum and to recall our MLA, I concluded these laws were deliberately written so that it was close to impossible actually to do what the law seems to allow. I fear the method to implement your recommendations for change (if any) may share the identical problem. If so, the already high level of frustration, anger, and despair over the political situation in this province (the nation, and the world) will rise even much higher.

Nevertheless, I continue to look forward with hope for your recommendations for substantive changes in our voting system, and for them to pass handily May 17, 2005.

Now some election reforms that aren't in your mandate (unfortunately):

- 1) We need a mechanism to trigger automatic referenda on issues of wide significant concern, such as privatizing more health services. The referendum wording must be clear and the results adhered to.
- 2) I want a law that if you can prove an elected politician lied or made substantially misleading statements in her/his campaign, another election for their office is held within one month.

Pegasis McGauley
5922 Hagen Road Harrop
Nelson, B.C. V1L 6P6