

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

VALEMOUNT PUBLIC HEARING DATED
8 MAY 2004 AT THE HOLIDAY INN,
VALEMOUNT

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.

David Marchant

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

The political views that I hold conflict with the views of the majority of voters who live in my riding. Currently, a person who votes for a third party they believe in is just throwing their vote away. I prefer the New Zealand electoral system, MMP, because my political views, although in a minority in the riding in which I live, would show up on the radar when the percent of party support in the province was calculated after an election.

KEY THEMES

David Marchant explained that his views are not represented in an FPP electoral system because his political preferences conflict with the majority view in his riding. He argued that in our current electoral system, MLAs represent geographical areas rather than the political views of the province. He believes that he would be better represented by an MLA who shares his political preferences rather than a person representing a geographical constituency.

Mr Marchant argued a PR system would be fairer and more democratic because voters could support a third party without wasting their vote. He prefers the NZ style MMP system because minority views would be represented when the total party vote is calculated. He argued that it is only fair that a party win a proportion of the seats in the legislature that matches the proportion of the vote it has received in BC.

Mr Marchant also argues that MMP in BC would reduce political polarization and encourage moderation and consensus. More diverse representation would prevent extreme policy swings.

He explained that when voters feel that their vote is wasted, they lose any sense of connection to the political system and feel increasingly alienated. Mr Marchant stated that the prospect of electoral system reform gives him hope that things will get better.

RECOMMENDATIONS

David Marchant recommends the adoption of a New Zealand style MMP electoral system in BC.

Quote: "I would be better represented by someone who lives in Vancouver with the same point of view, than someone who lives in my riding whose views were opposite to mine."

“It would feel so good to be able to vote for a party I really believe in and know that I am not throwing my vote away.”

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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

Q	Would you prefer an open or closed list system?
A	I'm concerned more about party philosophy rather than individual candidates. In this system, each party would come out with a list to make up the percent of the vote that they win. If there is an individual on that list which you do not like, you would know in advance and have the option of not voting for that party.
Q	But would you prefer a system where there is an open list where voters would have to indicate their preferences for candidates on the list?
A	I don't think many voters would want to spend the time going through a big long list. I would rather have faith in the party that shares my views to produce the list. If you had a chance to look at the list before the election, then that would be OK. I have more faith than someone who shares my views than someone who happens to live in my riding, but he stands for things that are the opposite of my views.
Q	If there could be a system where you could elect a person who shares your views and comes from your area then would that be better?
A	I think that would be great. At the moment I live in a conservative rural riding where my more urban views are swamped. If I write to my MLA she's not going to do anything about my views.
Q	Have you ever had anyone representing your point of view in your riding?
A	Sure, there have been some.
Q	You've mentioned diversity and the NZ example, and they also have reserved seats for the Maori, their native community. What is your opinion on having seats reserved for certain minority groups?

A	I wasn't aware of that. I guess that would be OK as long as you didn't have to reserve too many seats for too many groups.
Q	But you mentioned that you felt more 'urban' than 'rural' so what if there were seats set aside to represent urban views and rural views?
A	Well that sounds a bit complicated. I think if there were enough parties and I could vote for a party that actually represented my views rather than one of the big two, then that would be good. That way I could write to someone who I actually felt some connection with, someone who shared my political views.
Q	How important to you is it to have a local representative?
A	Not very, as long as I felt there was someone there with whom I felt some sense of connection then it wouldn't matter if he lived in Vancouver or on Vancouver Island.
Q	At other hearings, I've been surprised by how many people really want a local representative. Do you think there are a lot of people like you who aren't so concerned about having a local representative?
A	Well, I think that my views could be a minority in this riding, but then that's my whole problem with this current system!

Comment from panel

There were no comments from the panel.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

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

Q	When you said that you feel like a minority, I feel like most of us feel the same way no matter what area we live in.
A	The way it's set up now, you're basically only going to get two parties. I believe a New Zealand type model would encourage a lot more parties. Then you could vote for a party that seemed to be on the same wave length and at least have a little bit of a say.
Q	Is it possible to like a candidate from one of the big two parties even if you don't really like the party?

A	Yes that's possible. But there are times when I've been comfortable with a party's position but haven't wanted to vote for the local guy. I think though that the most important question for me is whether the party represents my views.
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SUBMISSION: **NO**