

PRESENTATION SUMMARY

VANCOUVER1 PUBLIC HEARING DATED
3 MAY 2004 AT MORRIS J. WOSK CENTRE
FOR DIALOGUE

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.

Mitch Anderson

People for Proportional Representation

DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

I support Proportional Representation because this form of voting will lessen the dramatic swings in government, and provide more balance. Proportional Representation encourages consensus building in government, and people will become more involved because every vote will count.

KEY THEMES

The presenter expressed the opinion that electoral reform possesses the potential to moderate yo-yo policy making. Further, introducing an element of proportionality would increase the fairness of representation, potentially combat voter apathy and declining voter turnout, and improve relations within the legislature.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The presenter recommended a change to MMP to preserve an element of geographical representation and introduce a measure of proportionality.

Quote: Countries using proportional representation tend to have much more balanced governments, far greater voter choice, and much better representation for women.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

Q A number of observers of our present political scene have expressed concern over the amount of control parties exercise over their members, and people have suggested that it might be appropriate to look at systems that address that imbalance, is this important to you?

A I think it's a very good point and it's one of the reasons why many people don't have any respect for the political process. First past the post tends to create two-party systems, so if you brought in PR you could have a greater diversity of political parties and hopefully people could vote their conscience rather than the party line.

Q Besides promoting consensus based politics, how else do you think a PR system would meet the needs of activists?

A I'm not saying that introducing PR would solve all our problems and that all activists would not need to do what they do. The feeling is that you're just disenfranchised. I think that people would be much happier if they felt those decisions were fair. I think that would do away with the need for a lot of people to work outside the process, as an activist under the current system, I don't know a single person, well only a few people, that are inclined to run for public office, I think that says more about our political system than the citizenry of BC. More people want to be involved in the process.

QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

Q What is the name of your group, and how many members does it have, and are you promoting a particular system?

A Our group is called the People for Proportional Representation. We're just groups of individuals who got together to look at improving democracy in BC. I think that there's general agreement within our group and with our colleagues. Trying to explain the importance of electoral reform is critical, and once they get it they almost become evangelical about it, they realize that we can exist in a system that works better.