

# PRESENTATION SUMMARY

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VANCOUVER PUBLIC HEARING  
DATED 29 MAY 2004  
AT VANCOUVER CONVENTION CENTRE

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.

# Doug Wright

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## DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

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The “Complete First-Past-the-Post” election system is a new method for electing legislative assemblies. The system is useful for federal, provincial, state, city or municipal elections.

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## KEY THEMES

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Mr. Wright discussed how the majority concept of 50% plus one used to form a decision in the context of geographical electoral districts is not representative of enough electors to represent a true majority of voters.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Wright recommended the adoption of a “complete first-past-the-post” system. According to the presenter, under such a system, no longer could a government be elected with less than 24% of the vote. Under this system forty MLAs are elected at the local district level, twenty are elected at the small regional district level, ten are elected at the medium large regional district level, and five are elected at the large regional district level for a total of 75 districts. Each district is represented by one MLA. Voters have the right to vote in more than one type of district, thereby raising actual voter representation to the 90% plus range. The candidate that gains the most votes in each district wins the seat, as under the current FPTP system.

According to Mr. Wright, the “complete first-past-the-post” system provides:

1. Effective regulation of government and the legislature.
2. The public with a strong power to elect their candidates of choice to the legislature.
3. Strong geographic representation of local and regional single-member districts.
4. Proportionate representation in the legislature for parties.
5. Proportionate and directly equal geographic influence in the legislature for voters in each single-member district.
6. Proportionate and directly equal popular influence in the legislature for the whole electorate at large.
7. Strong opposition party representation for voters and their specific geographic interests.

8. Widespread representation from candidates of choice for women, men, and minority groups.
9. The advantage of being easy to understand, as the candidate with the most votes wins. Furthermore, by voting in more than one district, individuals have a strong chance of helping to elect one of their chosen candidates.

*Quote: The time has come to strengthen the legitimacy of elected MLAs and the influence of democracy. If a high percentage of voters are not represented by candidates of their own direct choice in the legislature than these peoples are really being taxed for the duration of the term of government without representation.*

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QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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Q            How would your system work in such a geographically large province; wouldn't the local ridings in the north be huge?

A            Districts would become bigger, but not unmanageable. There are tradeoffs with every system. If we end up with PR there would be large districts. Under my system 40 MLA's are elected at the local level, so you are really doubling the size of the current ridings.

Q            Why would you want to reduce the number of seats from 79 to 75? And are your seats overlapping? How is your system different to the current FPTP system?

A            In some ways it will not be much different and I think that's the beauty of it. The system could be adjusted to make it any number of seats. The total number of districts is not written in stone and they are overlapping which offers another advantage by bringing stability and coherence to geographic decision making that adds to geographic development.

Q What are the responsibilities, or the roles, of the members in districts other than the local district?

A The same as the local member, however, they would simply be looking after a greater geographical area. People would know who they elected.

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QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

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Q It seems to me that the essence of your presentation is to review the riding areas so that many riding areas would have overlapping representation. With the focus of this Assembly on reviewing the electoral system of BC, attempting to address the apathy felt as a result of people's voices not being heard, how is it that the different riding system that you are proposing would give better representation in the legislature?

A There is no doubt in my mind that this system would give better representation. With the single member district system, when we go and vote sometimes more than 50% of the people elect who they want, but in BC over the past 50 years we have had entire legislatures that have been elected by less than 50% of voters. It happens in about four out of every ten elections. When you give people additional votes it increases their power to elect who they want. What the system does is to take the 50% range that we have right now and allows the people that don't currently have the power to elect somebody, the power to elect the person that they want. Nearly everybody can get what they want.