

# PRESENTATION SUMMARY

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VANCOUVER PUBLIC HEARING JUNE 12,  
2004 AT MARRIOTT PINNACLE HOTEL

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.

# Mebrat Kebede

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## DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

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Support for electoral reform and proportional representation.

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## KEY THEMES

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I am a registered nurse interested in the state of democracy in BC. I support the general position of British Columbians. I have lived here most of my life. I treasure my right to vote. I have some friends who gave up voting because their vote does not count. Thank you to the BC Liberal government for forming the Citizens' Assembly. I have a concern that the referendum is not binding and that the 60%-60% threshold is very high. In my opinion, a simple majority would have been sufficient.

I would like a change of the present electoral system. The concern is that some votes do not count at all. A government should be more accountable, more effective and cooperative. Now, all members of the nation are able to vote, today we are a very diverse society, and we can all vote. That's why the current system is unfair, because votes are not counted. In 2001, and 1996, smaller parties (20% of the vote) did not get any seats at all. My MLA does not represent me well, because he follows party discipline. I believe that the current system undermines the democratic process. I often hear my children doubting that their vote makes a difference. The current system leads to under-representation of women and minority groups and is exclusive.

Our electoral system should be inclusive, with more women and minority groups. A more proportional system would be better. I favour the MMP system. I think we should increase the number of seats in the legislature. The restriction to not increase seats is limiting. Districts would be single-member districts. And given the inability of the Assembly to increase the number of seats, constituencies would have to be larger. Each constituency MLA would represent a larger population and list seats would be very significant. They would be chosen in the proportion of the vote for each party. Like in Germany and New Zealand, we should have two votes, one for local constituent and second vote for a party list. BC has had enough of first-past-the-post. Many countries support PR. I urge the Assembly to engage the public to adopt MMP, and there should be a reasonable threshold of 5% to avoid the development of fringe parties.

I thank all of you and I hope that women and minority groups will have a stronger voice.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

MMP.

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

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- Comment I thank you about raising concerns about the threshold for referendum.
- A This is very personal to me. I have 3 children, and I want them to have a system for them to vote.
- Q About the PR seats, closed or open list system, with opportunity for voters to adjust list?
- A I like the open list system but I will leave it up to you to decide.
- Q Do you think a change will make young people come out and vote?
- A Yes, because when we tell young people about a system change, they would go out and vote.

**SUBMISSION: NO**