

# PRESENTATION SUMMARY

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VERNON PUBLIC HEARING  
DATED 21 JUNE 2004  
AT THE PRESTIGE INN VERNON SALON

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.

# Brenda Hitchen

## BC Nurses Union

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### DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

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A statement about why we need change and that I believe a mixed member proportional system would make everyone's vote count.

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### KEY THEMES

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Ms. Hitchen expressed her support for the position of BC Nurses Union. The presenter stated her frustration with the current FPTP system as a result of its production of wrong winners and artificial and exaggerated majorities. Ms. Hitchen argued that the operation of the current system has created problems of accountability and a void in local representation. Furthermore, the presenter stated the damaging effect that adversarial politics and party discipline has on factors such as youth engagement in the political process. Ms. Hitchen argued that the current "winner-take all" system leads to the under-representation of women and minorities. According to the presenter, for democracy to be effective it must be inclusive. In addition, to encourage the engagement of youth, and traditionally marginalized groups, the broad representation of society within the legislature is essential. Ms. Hitchen stated that the introduction of proportionality would produce a more inclusive legislature, allow a more diverse range of voices to be heard, and enhance the accountability of MLA's to constituents between elections.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Ms. Hitchen recommended:

1. The Citizens' Assembly rejects the current FPTP electoral system, and instead strive to be more inclusive and provide for a more consensual style of government.
2. The introduction of a form of proportional representation as the centre piece of electoral reform in British Columbia.
3. The Citizens' Assembly thinks critically about the MMP model of representation for British Columbia. According to Ms. Hitchen, such a system would allow voters to vote for their preferred local representative and potentially for a different party.
4. That the Citizens' Assembly engages the public in a review of possible MMP systems that could be used in British Columbia.
5. That the Citizens' Assembly recommends a fixed number of MLA seats.

6. That the Citizens' Assembly recommends a reasonable threshold of about 4 or 5% of the vote to secure representation, thereby discouraging the emergence of fringe parties.

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QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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Q           What did you mean by advocating a "fixed number of seats"?

A           We have 79 seats now and I understood that it had to be a fixed number, so I assume it would stay at 79.

Q           How would MMP improve the representation of women?

A           It has been noted in other countries that use MMP, that the introduction of a party list has enabled women and minority candidates to get elected, whereas they may not have been elected in a constituency seat. This has led to the increased representation of women and minorities in systems such as New Zealand's.