

# PRESENTATION SUMMARY

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WILLIAMS LAKE PUBLIC HEARING  
DATED 19 JUNE 2004  
AT THE OVERLANDER HOTEL  
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.

# Pat Adams

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## DESCRIPTION OF PRESENTATION

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The political health of the Province depends on the ability of citizens to be represented by people of their choice, not necessarily from the “first past the post” candidate. Minorities and women are often underrepresented in our current system. Change is needed to ensure equitable representation for all British Columbians.

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## KEY THEMES

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Ms. Adams expressed the opinion that the current FPTP system is outdated and has created voter apathy as reflected in low voter turnout. The presenter argued that voters have become disillusioned as a result of being forced to vote for a “winner take all” party rather than for an individual that more truly represents their regions and interests in the legislature. Ms. Adams noted the tendency of FPTP to produce “wrong winners” and exaggerated majorities, problems which exemplify the inadequate representation of the views of British Columbians that this system provides. Furthermore, the inadequate representation of women and minority groups in the legislature was discussed and proportional representation was proposed as a more equitable system of representation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Ms. Adams recommended the adoption of a system of proportional representation under which seats gained in the legislature would be proportional to the number of votes won in the electorate. According to the presenter, the introduction of PR would encourage voter participation, as individuals would feel that their votes count, and would further enable the meaningful participation of minor parties. In particular, Ms. Adams stressed that PR has enabled the higher representation of women than occurs under FPTP electoral systems. According to the presenter, if voters are provided with more than one choice on election-day then they will often cast a vote for a woman, moving society toward the correction of the legislative gender imbalance. Ms. Adams stated that there exists a growing awareness amongst women that they should have a much louder voice in the affairs of their country and Province, and PR was viewed as the means by which this may be facilitated.

*Quote: Countries with proportional representation consistently elect legislative members who more accurately reflect the population than do countries with our current “first past the post” voting system.*

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QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE PANEL

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Q            Could you be a little more specific regarding which type of PR you feel would deliver your objectives?

A            The devil is in the detail. PR as such is not a voting system. It is a generic ideology from which we could bring a voting system. Systems such as those used in Australia, with preferential voting, may constitute a more equitable system. I believe a system of PR in which we send our particular candidate would produce a better mix. I was in New Zealand when they introduced PR and there was some confusion as under their system you get two votes, but apparently it is working well now, and the coalition government is more accurately representing the views of New Zealand.

Q            What features of the current FPTP system do you like?

A            I don't like it. I actually believe that we set ourselves up for this imbalance. We send a party to Victoria or Ottawa and we don't get any local representation to deal with issues such as the pine beetle, for example, which are financially crippling to our area of the province.

Q            Is local representation important to you?

A            Local representation is very important to me. It is also a gender issue given the small numbers of women that are representatives. There are a number of issues, such as daycare, that would be more adequately identified and dealt with by women representatives. Women may be able to present reasoned arguments for the introduction of policies such as daycare.

Q            Would you mind if your electoral district had to be increased in size in order to gain proportionality?

A            When you live in our geographic location I believe that increasing the size may be inevitable in order to gain a measure of proportionality but I think that

it is doable.

Q Are you in favour of having two MLA's?

A PR is not in itself a voting system, it is a methodology. One of the potentials is having more than one representative, and of necessity it may increase the size of the constituencies. Realistically, I could not visualize the constituencies getting too large. I would say that they still would be relatively geographic and would probably be drawn on the basis of population in the area. The two ridings of the Cariboo may be altered.

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QUESTIONS, ANSWERS AND COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE

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Q Do you believe that under FPTP majority governments tend to become too dictatorial?

A Absolutely. If we look at the situation currently in BC, no matter what our political persuasion, I think that we would all agree that is a totally inequitable system and many of us voted not for a party but against a party.