

Climate Change and Electoral Reform

Prepared by Sarah Newton
9-100 Lewes Blvd
Whitehorse YT

For Electoral Reform Committee

The need for electoral reform has never been greater as the political divides within our country have been growing for years. The current protests in Ottawa and a number of border crossings in Canada highlight the types of disruptions we can experience when different needs and voices within our communities feel they have not been heard and acknowledged. Our community here in the Yukon is facing numerous crises that include COVID 19, affordable housing, the opioid epidemic and climate change. We require our elected officials and governments to work together in an evidence-based manner to address these challenges and create solutions that will benefit all of us. Within the crisis, there lies an opportunity to make changes that create much better social and economic conditions for everyone. These opportunities have been referred to a 'just transition', a green recovery from COVID 19, housing as a basic human necessity and a net zero carbon economy. We need people from across the political spectrum to come together around common goals to build a better future for the next generations.

This submission will focus on the current climate crisis, recognizing that there are many parallels in dealing with the other crises I have mentioned above. These challenges have implications on our community's economy, social well being and health. There are many different legislative tools available to us to work on addressing these issues. There is a large and growing body of evidence about why these issues are so critically important to our community. Many of us have been personally impacted by these challenges through the impacts on our businesses, struggling with housing or losing loved ones.

Climate change denial is on the decline because the number of extreme weather events has increased dramatically in the last few years. For example, the heat wave last summer in BC caused a severe wildfire season and left much of the interior vulnerable to the series of atmospheric rivers that hit in late November. (CBC, 2021) The highway washouts exacerbated supply chain issues and consumer panic buying across the province and into our own territory. The cost of insuring housing, especially multi unit residential, has been increasing and many insurance companies are no longer willing to insure these types of property. According to the Canadian Insurance Institute's Climate Risks report, the insurance industry is expecting severe weather-related claims to more than double in the next 10 years (Kovacs, 2020). The floods alone in BC are expected to cost insurance companies over \$500 million dollars, with additional costs to uninsured assets. Within the Yukon, our infrastructure is further impacted by melting permafrost and temperatures rising much faster than other areas of Canada.

Proportional representation particularly has many benefits to addressing the complex nature of the climate crisis and the other challenges facing Yukon. Representatives are encouraged to work together to find long term solutions beyond our four-year electoral terms. In the 2022 Climate Change

Performance Index, 12 of the top 15 highest ranking countries have proportional representative electoral systems (Burke, 2021). Between 1997 and 2003 out of 17 countries that were able to reduce their carbon emissions, 16 of them use proportional representation. (Cohen, 2010). Consistently, the countries that perform the best on the UN Sustainable Development Goals have proportional representation.

As in any crisis, there are also areas of opportunity and in order for Yukon to take full advantage of these, collaboration across political lines is needed. The World Bank acknowledges that economic development needs to integrate climate and social goals in order to be sustainable (World Bank Group, 2021). In order for strong measures to be successful at reducing emissions and building a just post-COVID world, we will need effective and innovative financial tools and legislative mechanisms that require cooperation, knowledge and willpower from all across the political spectrum.

In many ways, the Yukon is approaching a number of pinch points with a rapidly growing urban population and a number of pressures that include land use facilitated by the Umbrella Final Agreement, health care capacity, and infrastructure including housing. All of these issues have important relationships with climate change, both contributing to or mitigating our emissions as well as exposing our vulnerabilities. The Yukon is a landscape that encompasses so many strengths to address these challenges and I believe that electoral reform can help us rise to meet them.

References:

- 1) Front Burner, CBC, B.C. climate change and what's coming for Canada [B.C., climate change and what's coming for Canada | CBC Radio](#)
- 2) Kovacs Paul, (2020), "Climate Risks: Implications for the Insurance Industry in Canada, The Insurance Institute of Canada,
- 3) Cohen, Darcie, (2010) Do Political Preconditions Affect Environmental Outcomes? Exploring the Linkages Between Proportional Representation, Green Parties and the Kyoto Protocol. Simon Fraser University
- 4) Burke, Jan et al, (2021), 2022 Climate Change Performance Index Results: Monitoring Climate Mitigation Efforts of 60 Countries plus the EU – covering 92% of the Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions. Accessed from: [CCPI-2022-Results-2021-12-02-A4.pdf](#)
- 5) World Bank Group. 2021. World Bank Group Climate Change Action Plan 2021–2025 : Supporting Green, Resilient, and Inclusive Development. World Bank, Washington, DC. © World Bank. Accessed from: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/35799> License: CC BY 3.0 IGO.