

REMI SMITH

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Special Committee on Electoral Reform

On the benefit of increasing the number of members in the Assembly:

I have followed the Committee's progress closely and did respond to the survey. However, I believe the effective number of MLAs needs to be increased.

Although the Yukon has a very small population which argues against increasing the number of members, I believe there are a number of other criteria that argue very strongly for an increase.

First, there is the size of the Territory: The present number of ridings forces many disparate and distant communities into the same riding. For example, Faro and Ross River might have more in common with Carmacks and area than their present situation. Also many of the ridings on the outer edges of Whitehorse are a hodge-podge of rural, exurban, suburban and urban. The flooding in Marsh Lake and area as well as that area's growth show the commonality of interest that exists in the Whitehorse outskirts. These areas surrounding Whitehorse might also benefit from being in a cohesive riding.

Second, there is the fast increasing complexity of governing modern democratic jurisdictions and the increasing demands on the elected representatives. Consider as some factors the increasing extra-jurisdictional demands such as national Ministers' Councils (ie. Environment, or Finance, or Justice as examples). Then there is the increasing direct demands on government which can be seen by the rapidly increasing number of agencies and civil servants.

Among other things we, as citizens, expect from our representatives is good governance and I would submit, based on my experience in the Yukon, that there is a serious governance problem in the Yukon and that it starts at the top, in the Assembly.

19 members is not enough to come close to meeting citizen expectations:

One is the speaker

Three are in one opposition party which attempts to fulfill its obligation of holding a whole government accountable.

Eight are in the Official Opposition, which of itself is possibly adequate at best.

Eight are the governing party and need to fulfill all the Executive functions. Not realistically possible in the modern context, leaving our representatives very subject to the bureaucracy and leaving the bureaucracy with weak policy and political direction.

I would submit that at least 4 members/ridings should be added. Although I do not have the resources to detail where and how these would be distributed, 3 could easily be set around and in Whitehorse and a further rural seat could alleviate some of the issues of distance and lack of commonality of interests between communities.

On another point, I personally prefer members that represent ridings directly as I believe there is a very personal contact between citizens and their MLAs in the Yukon that should be maintained.

I also lean to seeking a form of proportional representation though I have no present opinion on a method.

The Assembly, in my respectful view, needs more talent and “persons to carry the load”.

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