

From: Mike Ellis

Sent: Tuesday, April 26, 2022 10:21 PM

Subject: Support for larger ridings / districts

Hello

Thanks for the opportunity to comment. I have reviewed the brochure I received in the mail and have a few comments. Note first that I live in Riverdale South.

First, the current number of MLAs seems to be functioning well. It allows for enough cabinet members / healthy debate during question period / etc.

I start here, because with 19 MLAs, and a one-candidate-per-riding system, we get to the heart of what I believe to be the single biggest issue needing reform. Whitehorse-area MLAs have the ridings with the largest populations, and yet we still end up with artificial and ineffective riding divisions, simply due to needing to create so many Whitehorse ridings. My issues are no different than those in Riverdale North, yet we have different representatives. There is no perfect way to divide Whitehorse up into equal population groups, but larger ridings/districts would likely make this issue significantly less pronounced.

Neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood ridings also creates another problem of representation. The municipality uses an at-large system, which makes sense. Municipal issues are almost always better decided upon by elected officials who consider the perspectives of all residents, and don't give extra weight to a subset that they alone represent. However, this results in residents turning to their territorial representatives to bring up neighbourhood-specific issues. The large majority of issues that I share with my neighbours are municipal - parks, street cleaning, trails, curbside recycling, etc. Even things that seem territorial are arguably not - such as schools - although run by the territory, it is the municipality's planning and zoning that ultimately allows the school to be where it is. This results in confusing and sometimes messy overlap between territorial and municipal issues. Example: the current notion of applying a higher level of protection to McIntyre Creek park, despite the City of Whitehorse already affording this land, entirely within their jurisdiction, the highest level of protection that it has.

Finally, it seems very likely that population growth will continue to occur mostly in Whitehorse. This will only make the current problem worse. With such a large amount of semi-arbitrary riding boundaries, but growth concentrated in certain areas, ridings constantly need to be adjusted to try to keep the amount of people per (urban) riding approximately equal. The Electoral Boundaries Commission recommended several adjustments be done prior to the 2021 election to account for this, such as the creation of a Whistle Bend riding. However, it appears that not all of the recommendations were palatable, such as adding a 20th MLA, and so they were not implemented. If it is going to continue to be too difficult to adjust riding boundaries, then clearly the system is broken and needs adjustment.

I realize that the main focus of reform is less about riding size, and more about fairness. People are understandably frustrated with a system that results in majority rule without a majority of the vote. I also support reform that would eliminate the first past the post system in favour of a system that is employed elsewhere to demonstrably good results. In any situation, I wanted to voice support for larger ridings/districts as another issue that could provide significant benefits for multiple reasons.

Thank you for your work on this issue, and for receiving feedback

Mike Ellis