

*Fair Vote Yukon* is a non-partisan citizen's movement advocating for electoral reform in the Yukon.

We are here today to recommend the formation of a Yukon Citizens Assembly on Electoral Reform.

This Special Committee is an important first step towards delivering an electoral system that better serves Yukoners. However, electoral reform is inherently a politically charged matter. To ensure public confidence in the reform process, and to create a truly democratic foundation to our electoral future, Fair Vote Yukon asks the Special Committee to recommend to the Yukon Legislative Assembly the formation of a Yukon Citizens Assembly on Electoral Reform.

Fair Vote Yukon believes that a Citizens Assembly, (CA), would have public confidence in the reform process and make un-biased recommendations on how to create a truly democratic foundation to our electoral future.

Throughout the world there are many electoral systems that more effectively represent the will of their citizens. All the successful systems are carefully tailored to the unique circumstances of the particular jurisdiction.

Yukon poses a unique challenge when thinking about designing a fairer electoral system. The large disparity of population size between the urban electoral districts of Whitehorse and those of more remote communities complicates the matter. Furthermore, there are big differences between cultures amongst these small remote communities.

Determining the electoral system best suited to effectively represent all Yukoners is not a simple or clear-cut task. There are many different voting systems to consider, each with a varying impact on key characteristics such as proportionality, regional representation, and the ability to vote for parties or candidates.

A recommendation developed by a Citizens Assembly would elegantly address these problems. Randomly chosen Citizens Assemblies are inherently open and non-partisan. Fair Vote Yukon believes that a properly resourced, arms-length Citizens Assembly could, along with a well-executed public education and consultation campaign, encourage public participation.

Peter Loewen from the Monk Institute, an opponent of electoral reform, grudgingly observed that the BC use of a Citizens' Assembly, "*gave it a bit more credence.*" Both the *Samara Centre for Democracy* and the *Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, (OECD)*, found high levels of public trust in Citizens Assemblies. A poll published in the journal, *Irish Political Studies*, confirms these findings; "*Perhaps the first thing to note is that overall levels of*

*support for CAs are relatively high. Over 75% of respondents agree that there are benefits in implementing Citizens Assemblies.”*

Fair Vote Yukon believes that, with all the available technological advances brought on by the COVID Pandemic, a Citizen’s Assembly could be much more efficient today. Meetings could happen on-line. Presentations like this one can be shared on-line.

Fair Vote Yukon believes that Yukon is the perfect place for an effective Citizen’s Assembly to be created. All First Nations in the Yukon hold at least one General Assembly every year and many hold multiple Special Assemblies to decide on important matters for its Citizens. To gather, to be educated together on important matters, is an important part of Yukon culture. The Yukon is an international leader in First Nation’s self- governance development and ground-breaking Land Claims agreements that protect the rights of all Yukoners.

The time is ripe for Yukon to be leaders again, this time in transforming our electoral system. The Climate Emergency demands all voices be heard when it comes to the Climate Solutions that we need.

On this Earth Day we ask the Special Committee to be bold. Create a Citizen’s Assembly on Electoral Reform.

In closing, we would like to leave you with a plea from long-time Fair Vote Yukon member, Astrid Vogt.

*“It would be great to finally dig in our heels and request a Yukon citizens assembly - even just for educational reasons so Yukon citizens would have a chance to learn about PR, (proportional representation), and what it means to be able to vote with your heart without having to constantly worry about the vote split!”*

Fair Vote Yukon thanks the Special Committee on Electoral Reform for the opportunity to make a submission. Fair Vote Yukon

*Fair Vote Yukon is a non-partisan citizens’ movement advocating for electoral reform in the Yukon, established by Danielle Daffe in 2009.*

*Sally Wright has been a member of Fair Vote Yukon since 2013 and has co-authored, with Dave Brekke and other members, dozens of locally published letters, advocating for fair and proportional electoral system in the Yukon.*

*Linda Leon is known for her letters to the press on political matters, most notably the series on Electoral Reform in Yukon published locally, and in rabble.ca, in 2018.*