



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Issue 15

35th Legislature

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORM

Public Proceedings: Evidence

Monday, May 30, 2022 — 6:00 p.m.

Chair: Kate White

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORM

Members:

Kate White, Chair
Brad Cathers, Vice-Chair
Hon. John Streicker

Clerk:

Allison Lloyd, Clerk of Committees

Speakers:

Dave Brekke
Al Cushing
Sue Greetham
Sally Wright
JP Pinard
Linda Leon
Sue Greetham
Juliette Belisle-Greetham
Werner Rhein
Lenore Morris
Joline Beauregard
David Skelton
Spence Hill

EVIDENCE**Whitehorse, Yukon****Monday, May 30, 2022 — 6:00 p.m.**

Chair (Ms. White): I will now call to order this hearing of the Yukon Legislative Assembly Special Committee on Electoral Reform. I would like to begin by respectfully acknowledging that we are meeting on the traditional territories of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

The Committee is aware that not all Yukoners knew about this event and that it was occurring today, and we are committed to ensuring that additional advertising will be made public in a timely fashion for upcoming public events — so, we apologize.

This public hearing is scheduled for 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. tonight, and it is possible that not all people who wish to speak will have an opportunity to present today. A second hearing will be held in Whitehorse on September 7. Additional public hearings will also be held over the summer in Haines Junction, Carmacks, Mayo, Dawson City, Teslin, and Watson Lake. The Committee would like to remind Yukoners that they may also provide their input by e-mail or letter mail or by using the comment form on howyukonvotes.ca.

Allow me to introduce the members of the Committee. My name is Kate White, Chair of the Committee and Member of the Legislative Assembly for Takhini-Kopper King; Brad Cathers is vice-chair of the Committee and the Member for Lake Laberge; and finally, the Hon. John Streicker is the Member for Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes.

This Committee was established by the Yukon Legislative Assembly on May 26, 2021. The Committee's purpose is to establish electoral reform and report to the Assembly its findings and recommendations. In our study of potential changes to the voting system, the Committee first sought to identify what options may be available. The Committee hired Dr. Keith Archer to prepare a report on electoral systems.

Dr. Archer's full 76-page report and executive summary are available on the Committee's webpage, yukonassembly.ca/SCER.

The information from Dr. Archer's report has been summarized on the website howyukonvotes.ca. Summaries of some of the potential voting systems are included on a brochure that was sent to all Yukoners. Copies of the pamphlet are also available here tonight.

To deepen its understanding of the topic, the Committee heard from subject matter experts, including Dr. Archer, and academics from across Canada and the world through 14 video conference hearings held between January and April of this year. Transcripts and recordings of these hearings are available on the Committee's webpage.

It is important to the Committee to know what Yukoners think about electoral reform. From February 15 to April 10, 2022, the Yukon Bureau of Statistics administered a public survey for the Committee. The Committee would like to thank the 6,129 Yukoners who completed that survey, so that's

17.1 percent of Yukoners 16 and older, and at this point in time, no survey in Yukon has had more people respond.

We have not yet decided on our recommendations to the Legislative Assembly. Tonight, the Committee is collecting opinions and ideas from Yukoners on electoral reform. The time allotted for this hearing will be devoted to hearing from you. As such, we will not be answering questions or presenting our opinions or information we have collected on electoral reform today.

If you would like to present your opinion to the Committee, please ensure that you have registered online or at the registration table at the back. Please note that this hearing is being recorded and transcribed. Everything you say will be on the public record and posted on the Committee's website. Tonight's event is also being streamed live on Facebook. If you are participating by Zoom, you can send a chat message to the Clerk to be added to the list of presenters, and if you need technical help with Zoom, please call 867-334-2448. Again, if you need help on Zoom, please call 867-334-2448.

Individual presentations to the Committee will be limited to five minutes. If there is time remaining at the end of the presentations, presenters may be invited to speak for longer. I would like to welcome everyone in the audience and ask that you please respect the rules of this hearing. Visitors are not allowed to disrupt or interfere in the proceedings; please refrain from making noise, including comments and applause, and please absolutely mute all electronic devices.

I would like to welcome everyone in the audience and ask that you please respect the rules of this hearing. We ask that you not use the local Wi-Fi that's posted behind me so that we can ensure the best possible streaming for the people participating online. When you are called to speak, please come up to the mic — you can see it in the middle there — and stand on the X; that way, the camera can pick you up.

Tonight, we're going to start with Dave Brekke — so, Al Cushing, you know you're next up.

Mr. Brekke?

Mr. Brekke: Thanks, Kate, and thanks for the lovely introduction, and thanks to the First Nations. Good evening, everyone. Thank you for being here to discuss this very important issue of electoral reform. The Yukon is lucky to have this Special Committee on Electoral Reform. I am Dave Brekke, former teacher, principal, and counsellor. After teaching 1965-66 at Whitehorse Elementary, I was offered the principalship in Old Crow, followed by Takhini Elementary. Old Crow, the isolated community, was where I learned the most about community.

Shortly after I retired, I was appointed federal returning officer for the 1996 election. In 2005, I served on the returning officers advisory committee to evaluate proposals to increase voter turnout. The government had called for proposals, but when they came in, they thought: "Holy cow, it's too political for us" — anyway, they ended up forming a committee to handle it. I was shocked when, just after introductions, one member — there were 18 of us from across Canada representing various types of electoral districts — and he was spitting-nails angry and said, "What are we looking at this

blankety-blank stuff for? Why aren't we looking at our voting system?" And before I had even completed my thought, an Elections Canada official said, "That's a political statement — can't even be recorded here, let alone discussed." So, I didn't learn any more at the meetings, but it was in the after meetings where I learned how dysfunctional our electoral system is.

After the meetings, I put in my resignation, and my resignation wasn't accepted until I had validated the 2006 results, and I have been trying to raise awareness ever since, and thanks now to the many capable people who have kept this going, and a special thanks to Chris Caldwell, with her comment — little descriptions that I think is really bang on.

Unidentified Speaker: (Inaudible)

Mr. Brekke: Thanks. Okay. Anyway, that's all I have to say, is just — I just hope — I can't give up hoping that I get a chance to vote in an electoral system where my vote will be counted whether or not I vote for the winner in my riding.

Chair: Thank you, Mr. Brekke. I'm just going to make the executive decision; I think it's okay to clap once someone has spoken, but if we can not interrupt as we're speaking, so if you would like to —

Thanks. I recognize that would have been really awkward and you all had things to feed back there, so please, feel free to clap after.

Al Cushing, you're next.

Mr. Cushing: Thank you, and thank you for holding this meeting and letting us all be here.

I'll start off by stating that I do have a bias, and my bias is that the first-past-the-post system, as it currently exists, is detrimental to the well-being of our democracy. That's my bias. I also have a thank you. I would like to thank the Committee for assembling an excellent series of speakers to address the issues around changing our electoral system, and I would recommend that anyone who missed those presentations should go to the website and take the time to review them.

In particular, I recommend that the Committee's marketing team take time to review those presentations. I don't know what the best electoral system would be, but I do know that we need a change. However, I do believe that there is a very good method for discovering a workable and trusted electoral system, and that is through the use of a citizens' assembly.

The members of a citizens' assembly are randomly selected. They would represent all communities, both geographical and social, and they must be free of any government, political, or corporate interference. The citizens' assembly should truly represent the people.

The assembly must have the time and the resources to be well-informed of all of the options and be given access to the tools to communicate effectively with the public. The government of the day must be willing to commit to the assembly's recommendations.

A well-constituted citizens' assembly will have public credibility, have a better grassroots understanding of the diverse democratic needs of our Yukon community than any politician could ever manage. It will, in fact, speak for all, so I heartily recommend the formation of a citizens' assembly in the near future. Thank you.

Chair: I just realized, before we go on, Committee members, if you have questions, please let me know.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Can I just ask — how much time do we have?

Chair: Well, I think a question each, at least, but right now —

Unidentified Speaker: (Inaudible)

Chair: Sure. Is that okay? Sorry, you are the first public hearing we've had. I apologize, but I'm moving; I'm fluidly adjusting. Dave, can you grab that microphone? John has a question for you.

Thank you to the team from Gunta who are supporting us electronically right now.

All right, Mr. Streicker?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: (Inaudible) But I'm going to just think that's what you meant: In a proportional system, your vote would count, and you said even if you didn't vote for someone who was elected. I'm wondering if you can just help me to get your sense of what makes your vote count.

Mr. Brekke: I've liked and I've even applied it, with a lot of help. I've applied it to past elections here. What we have is a mixed member proportional like New Zealand, Germany, many other countries with effective electoral systems. Is that fair enough?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Sure.

Mr. Brekke: Okay. And I don't know what more you want to hear on — I can tell you what the results were. We applied the New Zealand system to the 2016 results, which — it changed totally the results. We split the Yukon into three areas because people said they wanted to be close to their representative, so we have a north and south and Whitehorse. Whitehorse had 10 ridings. Out of the actual election results under our present system, the first-past-the-post system, 32 percent of the vote gave one seat; 41 percent gave seven seats; and 28 percent gave two seats. Sound very representative to you? A representative democracy?

Chair: I'm going to —

Mr. Brekke: Now, when we applied —

Chair: Mr. Brekke? Sorry, I'm just going to get in on this. Is your presentation — or is your voting system — is it available on fairvoteyukon?

Mr. Brekke: Yes, it is.

Chair: So, people can go to fairvoteyukon to see —

Mr. Brekke: Yes, and —

Chair: Excellent.

Mr. Brekke: — I would be pleased to answer any questions I can on it. I just want to give you the results of applying the New Zealand system to Whitehorse.

Chair: Sure.

Mr. Brekke: What we ended up with was 32 percent got three seats; 41 percent got four seats; and 28 percent got three seats.

Chair: Sure. I'm going to interrupt one more time. Mr. Brekke, so, your submission is also available on our website, and it has that breakdown.

Mr. Brekke: I think so.

Chair: So, I'm just going to stop, because you did give us your answer, which would be mixed member proportional representation.

Mr. Brekke: Oh, okay, I'm sorry.

Chair: No, it's just in an effort for time. Any additional questions for Mr. Brekke?

Mr. Brekke: Could I just add the results?

Chair: Sure.

Mr. Brekke: It went — it took from 43 percent effective voters, voters who could point to somebody their vote helped to elect, to 97 percent with the New Zealand system. If we had a second choice vote in there, it could even have been 100 percent. Thank you.

Chair: That's excellent. Any further questions, Mr. Streicker?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: No, that's great.

Chair: Thank you. Any questions for Mr. Cushing?

I have one. Al, if you can make your way back to the microphone? Sorry about that.

So, when you were talking about the citizens' assembly and you talked about that it needed to be resourced and it needed to have the time, you also said that there needed to be a commitment from government about the results. So, is your recommendation then that the citizens' assembly would decide what the voting system is and then it would be adopted by the government of the day?

Mr. Cushing: In the best of all possible worlds, yes. We have seen instances in Canada, for example, in British Columbia, where the citizens' assembly made very clear, very positive recommendations. Those recommendations were, in fact, adopted by all electoral districts and missed an artificially high percentage of votes in order to be accepted by the government. So, I think it is critical that we recognize, when we ask the people to express their opinion and tell us what's the best thing to do for them, that our elected representatives, who represent those people, would be willing to follow through with those recommendations. That doesn't mean there might not be opportunities for this, that, and the other in discussion, but ultimately, yes, it should be a clear choice by the people for the people.

Chair: Sure. Can I just follow that up? So, one of the presenters, when we talked — so, you're using the BC example, right? So, it was a very high percentage for the second one?

Mr. Cushing: That is correct.

Chair: So, I mean, that is a number that the citizens' assembly could recommend, right? They could say, you know, just over 50 percent, or that could be decided, but I guess the BC model is it went out to the electorate, right? It went out to the citizens of BC, and so, again, I guess I'm asking you to expound. So, are we saying, in Yukon, that your recommendation would be that the citizens' assembly would make the recommendation and it would go from there, government approving, or are you open to it going out to the electorate?

Mr. Cushing: I would prefer to see the citizens' assembly simply come forward, or their recommendations to come forward, and that would assume that the question given

to them was very clear. It might be: Do we want X, or do we want to look at X or Y? That clarity needs to be there. And then there needs to be assurance that the assembly will be listened to, because the assembly will represent a wide choice of the people.

We also heard from a number of the representatives, the experts who spoke, of the weakness, for example, of referendums. I can't remember which expert spoke and said the referendum is an automatic method to destroy something or just stop it, because in referendum, people vote "no" first, and it's really hard to get them to actually think through and vote "yes" or "no" in a very sensible way.

Again, we need to work with the citizens' assembly to hear what they have to say and know that we, all of us, are willing to accept the recommendation they bring forward. Will I necessarily like that recommendation? Not necessarily, but I am prepared to say that is the will of the people, and that is the true nature of democracy. It's not true democracy when 30 percent of the populace control government; that's a failure of democracy, and that's what we're seeing federally and territorially, and we just have to find a way to make that stop. Thank you.

Chair: Thank you. Any further questions?

No, thank you, Al. So, next up we have Sue Greetham, and then, following Sue, we have Sally Wright.

Sue? Yes, please stand at the microphone and on the X so you can be televised.

Ms. Greetham: First, I would like to thank Dave Brekke, who started this whole thing, and I would like to thank Al and Linda. They have all been through this for the past 15 years or so, where we — Fair Vote Yukon — have been researching and educating ourselves and finding out what is happening around the globe and what the heck is happening in the Yukon, with so few people with votes that actually count.

After that time, this resulted in an understanding of the need for a citizens' assembly. Very few voters are educated on Canadian elections and the outcome of their vote, or the value of their vote, or the lack of value. Most consider their vote win or lose. I did before I found out any better. Like a horse race, you put your bet down and hope for the best.

How many in this room can say "No, my vote hasn't counted in the past"? How many can say no? Any noes? Nobody wants to speak. Okay. I wouldn't ask the average voter if there's a better system than first-past-the-post — it's not a fair question; it just is not a fair question.

It's like, if you were scheduled for heart surgery and the doctor asked you for your preferred method, you might study the question and the procedure first before you made that decision. Well, voting is just about as important as that, because it's our future, and it's our people. I have always been trying to look after the people who can't stand up and speak. I can and I have and I know when I have not been recognized or represented by my own local representative, and it doesn't feel very good.

In theory, a candidate could be elected under the current system with just two votes. The most widely used families of PR electoral systems are — proportional representation

systems — are party list PR and mixed member PR. I wouldn't tell anyone which one is best. We need the education; we need mock elections to see how it turns out.

We have had single-party majority governments without the support of a majority of the voters as long as I can remember, almost every time, and we can change that. There are systems around the globe that represent the people, where everyone is represented. Proportional representation means each vote has equal value and everyone has an equal voice.

You know, we have to learn to work together, not in opposition to one another. The world is going ridiculous with opposition and fighting, and we want a fair voting system in the Yukon. We can do it here; we only have 42,000 people. If we can't get together here and represent 42,000 people, no one can do it. We can be a leader across Canada in the Yukon. We don't want a dictatorship, and many of us feel that's what we have.

So, if we want to return democracy to the way we had it when we only had two parties, there aren't two parties anymore. There are way more opinions in the Yukon, especially because we are a unique community, and we have a lot of people who need representation who are not common to Whitehorse.

Thank you very much.

Chair: Before you sit down, Sue, if you just stand up, I'm sure there will be questions.

Mr. Streicker? Mr. Cathers?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thanks, Sue. Could we just talk a little bit more about the concept of respect in the Legislature and just your thoughts on how a different voting system would help achieve a way in which the Legislature could work in a more constructive format?

Ms. Greetham: When you have everyone represented and you don't have a majority dictatorship, when you have 30 percent, 20 percent, 15 percent and you don't have one party with total power and we do have to work together, they will work together, and it has been proven around the globe that when people sit down and work together, not for the party — unfortunately, the party is the pain to us all, because everyone plays party lines. I went to the Legislature by invitation several times — I had to leave. I've never — I've been in private industry all my life, and I've never sat at a table in private industry trying to reach a goal and having everybody in opposition. That just didn't work; it didn't go there. I mean, I've seen Kate struggle for years on that side of the fence, and I'm sorry, Kate — you have to be given a lot of credit for what's happened, but if we change the electoral system and we give everyone a percentage, votes equal seats. That's it; it's simple, and everybody gets together and represents Yukon as a whole. It will work.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: That's great. I appreciate the answer.

Chair: I do actually have a question. You referenced mock elections. So, you submitted at least twice that I read today on the website, and the first one, you talked about the importance of giving people an opportunity to try a new system, and then you just referenced mock elections. Can you —

Ms. Greetham: At the university, we have a table. Fortunately, JP over here created some ballots. At the table,

when someone walked up, I said, "Have you ever voted?" Several of them said, "No, I haven't voted yet." And I would ask them why. Then other people would say, "Yes, I voted." "Did your vote count?" "Well —" They couldn't really decide.

So, anyway, I took them to the table, and the first ballot showed the examples of the current system. You have one choice: You can pick Wally, Gerald, Lucy, Alice, or Johnny. The next one, you could pick — so you pick the candidate. The next — here's another ballot, a different ballot, an option that we could choose. You pick any one of those candidates, you pick the party of your choice. Often, I will pick a party, but I would sure love to have that candidate over there who really knows leadership and who has been working their butts off with the public all their life. I want to pick them, but I also want to pick — maybe I don't want to pick their party. That's a second option.

Then you have a ballot that has first and second choice for the candidate, so maybe you have two of your favourites. You can pick — this is my first choice; this is my second choice, and I'm going to pick this party. Your chance of being represented by that kind of a ballot in the outcome of that election — the odds have just gone right up to the top.

Chair: Excellent. So, I would urge Fair Vote Yukon to submit that, maybe that ballot, in a summary of — sure, I'll take it now. Today, the Committee is being supported by our Clerk, Allison Lloyd, who has not only supported us through today. We had our 19th select committee meeting —

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Twentieth.

Chair: The 20th — sorry, the 20th meeting. You are our 15th hearing. So, since last July, this is our 35th time of being together, and it has all been supported by our Clerk. So, thank you, Allison.

Chair: Thank you, Ms. Greetham. Sally?

Ms. Wright: I'm just working on my props.

Chair: Just let me make sure your props are —

Ms. Wright: Hello.

Chair: Just one second, Ms. Wright. Blair, if Sally holds up her props, if she's facing forward, they'll be picked up by the camera? Okay. I think even just facing forward, you'll be picked up.

Ms. Wright: Where's the camera?

Chair: I'm not sure, but I was — oh, it is there. I was just confirming that if you held it up toward us, it would get picked up.

Ms. Wright: Yes, this is the ad from — in this one, it's the *Yukon News* from April 15.

Now, my name is Sally Wright, and I'm presently the chair of Fair Vote Yukon, and I presented before you on — Linda and I presented on behalf of Fair Vote Yukon on Thursday. I did, at the time — and I totally stand behind everything I said during that time. You asked me at that time to give you more feedback about your campaign and what the special Committee has been doing and all these meetings. It's an incredible amount of work that has happened, and when I talk to people at the Fireweed Market, everybody is very confused because they don't know what's going on. They don't know that — they're not used to seeing the territory carved up into random pieces,

and you know, the way you've described it in the ad is just so difficult for people to understand. Having a disclaimer at the bottom of the ad which you can only read with a magnifying glass, as far as I can tell — this is a really difficult ad — when I have been volunteering — and all of you people are very aware of how long Dave Brekke and I have been trying to educate people about these very important issues — to have our own electoral reform committee just do such a poor job at including local expertise on how to educate Yukoners, and give us a bit of respect, that Yukoners can actually — they care.

I'm sure there are many people who tried to do that survey who couldn't. I could barely get through it without collapsing in a fit of rage, and I feel very sorry for the Clerk of the Committee of how upset I was when I saw how badly the descriptions of the various systems available — how bad they were — poor. We were told that: "You want more information? Go online."

We are a very close community up here, and to be told by politicians to learn more about the alternatives out there online, as opposed to striking our own citizens' assembly of Yukoners who can explore these things and discuss them, instead of you not answering our question. I forgot it was a hearing, that you're just going to hear us and you won't answer your own questions, our questions to you — it is difficult for me, because there has just been so much wrong with this campaign so far.

People I talk to at the Fireweed Market are very angry because they don't understand what's going on. There has been no education. You're told to go online to find out. So, Fair Vote Yukon wanted to produce something that was a little more tactile, and that's why we came up with the ballots.

So, it's what you would look for when you went into: What would a PR ballot look like? So, this is what we have, and you're going to have it as an example — I guess an exhibit — but I think this is the way to learn. I would say that the citizens' assembly should just — that should be the referendum. People should be able to choose which ballot they like, because it's very self-explanatory, and it will answer your problem, John, about how you will know that your vote actually mattered. You have three chances on one of these ballots to have your desires met. It's quite stark.

When you go to the door, as a politician, and ask for somebody's vote, you want them to feel — you want that personal connection that you could be my second choice.

Chair: Thank you. Are there questions from John or Brad?

Sorry, I can go first, Sally. I just have one question — well, I have a couple of questions, but I'm going to start. Did you have a pamphlet delivered to your house?

Ms. Wright: Yes.

Chair: Okay.

Ms. Wright: It's just the same thing as this —

Chair: But not online.

Ms. Wright: Something came.

Chair: Sure. I —

Ms. Wright: You know, the writing is so hard to read, and it's so exclusive that I just look at it and see a blob that upsets me. That's all I see: a purple blob.

Chair: Okay. So, Sally, is your recommendation then a citizens' assembly? That's what you would like to see?

Ms. Wright: Yes, please.

Chair: Excellent. Any other questions?

Ms. Wright: As soon as possible. Because I do think you are going to spend the whole summer listening to upset people, and it's a massive waste of money, at this point, what has happened, and I just don't want you to go down that path that has been done before by other political bodies to get away from electoral reform. Give the people the opportunity to explore it and decide.

Chair: Sure, and I also don't — I'll put out right now that I don't actually think it's a waste of money to travel to the other communities to have hearings. I think it's important to hear from people, and we will be making a final report. We will be submitting it to the Legislative Assembly, and duly noted that your recommendation is for a citizens' assembly.

Any further questions?

Ms. Wright: No, I think this, the ad campaign, was an enormous waste of taxpayers' money.

Chair: Okay, thank you for the clarification.

Next up, we have David Skelton — sorry, JP — sorry, Mr. Pinard; you had a checkmark, but it's because you were next. And then after, it's David Skelton, so first up is JP Pinard.

Mr. Pinard: Thank you. My name is JP Pinard. I'm a member of Fair Vote Yukon, and I attempted to fill out that survey that was sent to me. I'm one of the people who failed to complete it, and I have a PhD — go figure. The reason I failed to complete it was because I felt I couldn't understand most of what was written in there, and I thought my time would be better spent if I did something else instead. So, thank you to David Brekke, who started all this, and to all the other people before me who spoke today, including Sally, Sue, and Al. I agree with what they say, and I support what they're talking about, especially what Al was referring to, creating a citizens' assembly.

I participated at the federal level. Remember when Mr. Trudeau had the team come up here to talk about electoral reform and we participated? We wanted to be active citizens, and we were very disappointed when it was just cancelled after all that. So, my hope was that we would see a Yukon version show success. There was also the BC thing that happened, and that also failed some time ago. I would like to see us here in the Yukon show success for the rest of the country.

We voted you in, for what it is — it was under the first-past-the-post system. We really don't feel that we have a lot of choices when we only have one X to put on a ballot for one person. What I find with that is that you end up losing quality people who want to run for politics and run for government, and just because they're associated with a party, it puts a real — you lose quality people; that's all I can really say about that. It would be better if we could separate the person from the party just so we could vote for good people and vote for the party we really want to see in government.

To try to keep it simple, part of my work is to try to keep the messages simple so everybody can understand. That's the reason why we created these three different-looking ballots.

We're not suggesting those should be the three that we should vote on — there might be other ballots that we should look at. That's what the citizens' assembly should be for, and the end product of the citizens' assembly should be to look at the vote on that ballot. Which ballot are we going to use to vote on, to vote with, in the next election? This is something that New Zealand has done. In fact, I think they voted in two elections with a new ballot and then let the populace decide: Do we like this new ballot or not? That's what we would like you to commit to, that yes, (1) to a citizens' assembly and (2) to accept what the citizens' assembly puts forward as a ballot. I'll leave it at that. Thank you.

Chair: Thanks, JP. Any questions? Go ahead, Mr. Streicker.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: JP, you talked about BC and said their methodology of looking at electoral reform failed as well, although they did do a citizens' assembly. So, can you just talk, if you have any thoughts about how, if we did have a citizens' assembly, to ensure that it doesn't come to the same outcome. I mean, of course, every citizens' assembly should choose what it wants to choose, but if the process failed somehow — if you have any thoughts about that.

Mr. Pinard: Yes, I won't say too much about BC and what they did. What I understood was that they were voting on whether they were going to let go of this first-past-the-post or not, and then there was a limitation on — I think you had to have 60 percent of the votes for this to work, and to me, that was one big red flag. Why go to 60 when we're barely making 50 percent to vote our electorates in office?

The difference we would like to see here is a very specific outcome from the citizens' assembly, and it should be specific to the ballot. At the end of the day, we're all going to go and sit in a booth, and we're going to look at a ballot. That's the product; that's the end product that we'd like to see a citizens' assembly put forward. Is it going to be a first-past-the-post or this one — whichever ballot that is presented forward? Which one does the citizens' assembly — which one of those ballots that you see in front of you that the citizens' assembly would vote for, for the next election, for the population of Yukon to try out?

Chair: I'm going to follow up. But when we look at the ballot, the ballot is representative of voting systems, so the citizens' assembly — not only would they focus on a ballot, but they'd have to focus on a system to get to the ballot. Am I correct?

Mr. Pinard: Yes.

Chair: Okay. And then you're saying to try it out. So, if you reference the New Zealand system, so I think it was used two times before there was a referendum that said: Should we continue on? But when you talk about trying out the ballot, are you suggesting something similar so that it would run one election? And in the second election, the question is: Do we keep this ballot or do we go back to first-past-the-post?

Mr. Pinard: I think that's a very good idea: Try it for two elections and then let the voters decide if they like that ballot or not.

Chair: Thank you. Any further questions? Mr. Cathers?

Mr. Cathers: Thanks, JP. I would just note for anyone who hasn't watched the presentation that we heard from the presenter from New Zealand that they may find that of interest. My understanding is they actually had three referendums in support of changing the system, including before they made the change.

I would just follow up on what Kate asked, in terms of looking at the ballot. I appreciate your point that you think that voters may want to know what that looks like on a ballot, but as Kate mentioned, it does integrally connect with the system, because depending on what perspective you're looking at it with, if you feel your vote didn't count, you may look at the ballot and see this is a positive change; if you're sitting in rural Yukon, for example, and wondering how large an area your MLA will represent, this part doesn't answer that. So, is there a companion piece that you would see going with the ballot?

Mr. Pinard: Yes, and thank you for that question. I think that's the citizens' assembly's to address — what system goes behind the ballot that we choose.

Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pinard. Mr. Skelton.

Mr. Skelton: I'm fine.

Chair: You're fine? Thank you. Moving on to Linda Leon. Ms. Leon?

Ms. Leon: I was going to talk about your advertising campaign, and I think it has been addressed, but I would say that, if the Committee does recommend a citizens' assembly — and I really hope you do, because I don't see how, no matter how hard you work, you're going to be able to come up with a system that actually works in the territory. I think it would have to go to the people through a citizens' assembly, and I would also suggest that perhaps, if you have advisors to the citizens' assembly, that maybe Dr. Archer is not the lead advisor, because I found him very difficult to understand when he spoke, and perhaps that's the reason why your marketing committee is confused. Thank you.

Chair: Thank you. Mr. Streicker?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Linda, when you and Sally presented to us before, we started getting into some questions about details about the citizens' assembly, because there are lots of differences between them. I'm just wondering if, in the interim, whether you have given that any more thought and would mind just elaborating a bit on what you feel would make for a successful citizens' assembly here in the Yukon — things like how it's selected, how widely — how big, how small, how it's resourced, as some people have spoken about.

Ms. Leon: I've been looking at other citizens' assemblies: the Scottish one, the Irish one. The people, the citizens, they spend a long time — they spend months studying these things. Pre-pandemic, it was probably quite expensive, because they probably had to meet. Although in Ireland, their distances — I don't know how many Irelands you could fit in Yukon, but Sally made a really good point at our presentation that it should be two from every community. The more I thought about it, the more I realized she was right, because even though our population is small, we are really diverse, and if we're going to go for electoral reform and we're thinking in

terms of fairness, we really need to have the citizens' assembly comprised of representatives from all the communities.

Another thing I thought was that there needs to be time to set it up so that they meet every third weekend on Zoom. Another aspect of it was education, because the citizens' assembly won't necessarily understand about electoral systems, so we need an ability for them to call on experts. In the various expert submissions, there were some really good thinkers who could also articulate really well. I'm thinking of Dr. Carty, for example, who was a really good speaker. He made it easy to understand. Possibly JP could go up with his ballots, and they could try it out, but it has to be a long process; it can't be something where you give them a month and then they have to decide. It won't work if it's that short a period.

I spoke with Dave Locke quite a while ago about what happened with the Peel River watershed commission for the land use plan, and he said that it was three stages. There was education; there were questions. They went up to each community three times, each of the affected communities, and went three times, and there were steps. There was education about the issue, which would be the first step, and then there was a question period from the stakeholders, and then there were submissions from the stakeholders, and maybe that's how it would have to work with the citizens' assembly.

It might happen naturally that way. Also, I think the findings of the citizens' assembly must be really well-publicized. The citizens' assembly in BC had a really great website, and it's worth taking a look at. Unfortunately, it wasn't promoted really well, which I think they would have had more people voting for changing their electoral system if it had been, because it was really quite clear and fun and easy to look at. I would recommend looking at that.

Chair: I'm going to ask a follow-up, actually. One of the things that you identified was communities, and that's actually something we've grappled with. So, if we talk about incorporated communities —

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Eight.

Chair: There you go, eight incorporated communities. So, then we think about that's 16 people, but we're not talking about unincorporated, so we're not talking about Marsh Lake, or Tagish, or Lake Laberge, Pelly Crossing. So, we have grappled, as we try to work our way through this: What does a "community" mean? How would that look? Part of the reason why we asked both you and Sally, when you presented, is because BC was much easier. BC's boundaries are quite a bit different from ours, and so we're grappling with: What would a "community" be? For example, in the City of Whitehorse, I think we're at 31,000 people out of 44,000. So, for example, Mr. Cathers references Laberge, which is unincorporated. When you talk about community, do you see neighbourhoods? Do you see unincorporated communities? Do you see physically where people live? If I asked you to broaden it out, so we have eight incorporated communities —

Ms. Leon: It has to be broader than that.

Chair: Sure.

Ms. Leon: And that's not enough people. I think you need a larger sample anyway. So, if you're looking at Pelly,

maybe a way to get around it would be to also look at the different First Nation territories. That might be one way to bring it in — and the official communities — but you're going to need to have Lake Laberge, because they're different. I don't think — maybe I haven't been here long enough, but I used to live in Riverdale, and I wouldn't have cared that much if I was lumped in with Riverdale North, you know. My issues were not that different, but you would still need to respect the electoral districts in Whitehorse to get a numerical representation, but it's really important to get First Nations' input on this — critical, I think.

Chair: That was one thing that BC had done — they specifically — there was outreach done to try to get that representation. You're right — in Yukon with the 14 First Nations, yes, and so there wasn't a right or wrong. I was just trying to grapple with, as we try to define what — if that's the way we go, what does that look like? How many people is the right number? I don't know what the answer is to any of that, but I do know that I learned a lot from the presentations on citizens' assemblies.

Ms. Leon: If a citizens' assembly is well-advertised within the territory, it shouldn't even cost that much to do it. I could probably do it on a Yukon artist-at-work budget myself.

Chair: That's because you're whizzed about it. There's true wizardry there with that.

Ms. Leon: You know, just for the promotional part of it, as long as people know what's going on. One of the problems with the BC citizens' assembly, in spite of their activities and in spite of this great website, their activities were not publicized adequately, and the average citizen didn't even know that there was a citizens' assembly on electoral reform. In spite of that, they got 58 percent.

Chair: I think the interesting thing for folks who haven't watched all of the hearings — because there are quite a few hours — is that BC actually became something that was replicated so that the citizens' assembly in both Ireland and Scotland are based on the BC model, because that was the first time on that level that the engagement had been put to the citizens. There's some discussion as to whether or not every important question should go to the citizens, because in Scotland now, they're saying: "We elect you to make those decisions", so there is the flip side of that.

But BC was the learning ground for citizens' assemblies internationally at that point.

Ms. Leon: It was impressive.

Chair: Yes.

Ms. Leon: It was impressive.

Chair: Absolutely. Any other questions?

Mr. Cathers: I do appreciate your thoughts on the community thing. As I had mentioned, for anybody who hadn't been on the hearing when Fair Vote presented before, a question that I think needs to be addressed, if you're dealing with the proposal of looking at representation by community, is — for example, I'm going to talk about my riding, because that's one I'm intimately familiar with.

The Hot Springs Road area has a population that's higher than a number of towns, such as Carmacks and Mayo, but a lot

of people who live in Whitehorse have the impression it's just a handful of people on the periphery. The same goes for the Mayo Road area, as well as for Ibx Valley. As I mentioned at the time, there's also the question, in terms of if you're looking at even close communities — you have representatives for both Burwash and Destruction Bay or merge them together — how do you deal with that and come up, if that's the model that gets picked, that is both fairly balancing representation by community with the importance of some representation for population, for lack of a better term?

Ms. Leon: If you go with the citizens' assembly — and I really, really hope you do — you're going to have to spend a lot of time parsing that out. It'll be a lot of hard work, but I think it would be hard work worth doing.

Chair: So, we will take your suggestion for a citizens' assembly.

At this point in time, we don't have anyone else on the presenter list, so what I will suggest is that we just take a short 10-minute break. If anyone in the room would like to sign up, I encourage you to do so. You just need to go to the back table. We just need your name and your contact phone number, and if anyone would like to add additional comments, you're welcome to sign up again. If anyone is online right now, on Facebook or on Zoom, and you'd like to share your thoughts, we have two screens where you would appear behind us and in front of us so we would see, and we would be delighted to have you present.

So, we'll take a quick 10 minutes. If anyone would like to add additional information, please sign up again, and we will be back in 10 minutes.

Recess

Chair: We went a bit longer than 10 minutes. There were lots of great conversations happening, which I appreciate. So, if I can get everybody back to their seats. Again, I really appreciate that, for our first public hearing, you folks are rolling along with us. I will use this as a learning opportunity as we move forward.

Our first speaker coming after the break is going to be Sue Greetham, and Werner Rhein, you're on deck.

Ms. Greetham: Because we're in the presence of changing systems and things like that, I think with voting, we should be looking at 16-year-olds. I have a 16-year-old here today with me who won't speak, but if she spoke, you would be blown away with what she knows about elections and about balloting and about all those things. She can answer the questions so many people can't answer, but they still get to vote.

So, I see it's across the country right now; it's a question. I've been listening to the news recently about people considering reducing the age to 16. I don't know what it takes to make that happen, but I can't see why it shouldn't. They get drivers' licences; people get married and have jobs and all those things. In the Yukon, 16 would be a good time to start, and maybe the education departments then would prepare the students a little faster in the programs and the electoral systems, and more specific education would go along with it.

Chair: Sue, if I could just get you back to the microphone. Sorry, Werner. I like how the crowd just spontaneously erupted in the middle, although I know you were all waiting to hold it to the end.

So, Sue, when you talk about lowering the age to 16 and you talk about the teenagers in your life, is that a conversation that they're having? Are they —

Ms. Greetham: Yes.

Chair: That you hear?

Ms. Greetham: Yes, and why not? I mean, why would we stick with it at the ages? Everything is moving so much faster. Life moves faster; education moves faster; technology moves faster. The kids are younger. They seem like adults now. So, yes, they're talking about it, and I can't see why.

Juliette.

Chair: Juliette, can you go to the microphone? I believe this is the 16-year-old.

Ms. Belisle-Greetham: Yes.

Chair: Juliette, can you say your first and last name?

Ms. Belisle-Greetham: My name is Juliette Greetham, and I'm 17 years old, and I just want to say that I have a job, and I pay taxes, and I would like to be able to vote and to be able to be represented, if I'm a taxpayer.

Chair: Juliette, can you stay? I'm going to keep you both there, actually, because I think there is distinctly a possibility of questions. Any question for Juliette?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Sure. Hi, Juliette. Can you just tell me, first of all, in your school, do they have — like your, sorry, grandmother's —

Ms. Belisle-Greetham: Yes.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Sorry, I was suggesting that they would have civics classes. I'm just wondering what they have in our schools right now, and also, from when you were 16 to when you will be 18, how many elections would you have hit? The voting age — we're talking about territorial elections, but I'm just wondering how many elections came in that period for you.

Ms. Belisle-Greetham: I have not been educated on that, and I wish I would have in school. I have learned about the Canadian Constitution and things like those, but I really wish that I would learn about how to vote, what happens to my vote, and how that can affect my country and my classes, because I am not being educated on that.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Okay, and just on that question, last fall was a federal election, and last spring was a territorial election, so you would have been 16 for both of those?

Ms. Belisle-Greetham: Yes.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thanks.

Chair: And a municipal election.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: And a municipal election, right.

Chair: So, three elections in that one year.

Any other questions? Mr. Cathers?

Mr. Cathers: First of all, thanks, Juliette, and I guess I would just ask — you mentioned that you hadn't really been taught about it in school. What sort of things would you like to see, in terms of more information for students, and at what sort of grade level do you think it would be appropriate?

Ms. Belisle-Greetham: I think maybe as soon as we're taught social studies, because I have been learning about the monarchy and all these different government types since I would say I was 10 years old. I've been taught the same things over and over, but I would like to see some changes, because I have noticed that, in other places, younger people are allowed to vote in other countries, and I would like that to be a possibility here. I would also like that we are taught how to vote and these important life skills and things that we should probably know as a young adult.

Chair: Thank you, Juliette.

Mr. Brekke, you are on my list. All right, Mr. Rhein.

Mr. Rhein: My name is Werner Rhein. I think I'm known as the squeaky wheel or the guy who always has a monkey wrench to throw in the machinery. I heard the word "education" a few times. What do you mean with that? Do you mean with that explaining the three different voting systems to people, or would you educate people about other countries, how their voting systems work?

I had some dumb ideas this afternoon and went through my pile of voting information for Switzerland. I'm a dual citizen, and I'm voting several times a year in Switzerland. To start with, Switzerland is a democracy since 1400. It got updated and changed over the time a few times, but now, there are about 17 different parties in the parliament. It has two houses, the upper house and the lower house, like we have too, and everybody in there is elected. On top of the whole circus, there are seven people — not one, seven. They are elected by the parliament for four years, and every year they elect out of the seven — they elect the president. Every year, it changes. The president is the tip on the scale. If they vote three, three, his vote will change that, will count.

I understand, under education, you should tell people who are so stuck in a rut for how many — 200 years? — with that first-past-the-post voting system, that there are some other options to that, not just the three different voting systems, but that there are other countries that have different systems that work. Why can't we adopt a different system from New Zealand or Australia, which came out of the Commonwealth with the same voting system of first-past-the-post and people got fed up with it and they changed it?

So, that's, in my opinion, education. It doesn't have to be tremendously complicated, like the one is from Switzerland. I get a ballot from 70 parties that have elected their own representatives, but I can go and scratch one name out there, the guy I don't like, and put my own name in or mix it up with different parties. So, you don't actually need much more mix anyway. Then there is none in that parliament who has the absolute 51 percent. They all have a small percentage, and they have to sit around a round table and talk about it. In my opinion, that's a democracy.

The thing came up for voting at 16; I just voted for Switzerland. They had that coming up, and I voted that young people can vote, but I can remember in my life — the young people these days are much more educated than I ever was. I was never taught how to speak in school. You said yes or no, and that's it. Now they can talk, so they are absolutely capable

of voting. They are working, paying taxes; with a little bit older, they can even go into the military, and they should be able, these days — they should be able to vote.

Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rhein.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Werner, we did ask some questions about other places. One of the things that we tried to focus on was places that had populations that were a little smaller, how they have had different voting systems, given that we have 40,000-some people here. In Switzerland, I've known about the more direct democracy, both in terms of the voting system and in questions that are asked for you to vote on, but what I don't know about is whether there are examples of electoral reform or not first-past-the-post systems in the cantons or even in the cities. I'm just wondering if you know of examples where they use different systems from first-past-the-post.

Mr. Rhein: No, I don't know anything like this. It works for a long period of time like this. One thing why there are so many things coming up to vote is the politicians have very low ceilings in spending power, so if they want to build a new autobahn somewhere and it's above that, it has to go to the people. All kinds of things — the voting right now is coming up, they said already yes to the F-35s, and somebody got a petition together with 100,000 people, and they want to say no. So, like you said, it's a really direct democracy.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thanks.

Mr. Cathers: Thank you, and I'll just jump in too, Werner. I appreciated that. One thing that you're touching a little bit on is an issue that doesn't seem to get discussed a lot when people are talking about electoral reform, but I think it's an important one, and that is at what level the decisions are being made, whether as you noted through answering questions in the Swiss system or putting questions on a ballot and people having the opportunity to participate directly. There has been a trend within Canada generally, not just here, that a lot of decisions are increasingly made by the respective Cabinets of each jurisdiction, not actually in Parliament or the Legislative Assembly. So, the focus has been in a lot of submissions on the balance in the Assembly itself, but I think it doesn't really address the question of: Are the decisions being made by the Assembly, or are they being made by Cabinet?

I would just be interested if you have any thoughts on that point or any suggestions there.

Mr. Rhein: Because of the big mix in Switzerland with parties, they always have to talk to each other. It's almost like a coalition. So, nobody has the power to actually make a decision straightforward — only for a few little things, where they have the financial power to do so.

The other thing I'm getting hung up a little bit — we have 16 different communities in the Yukon, plus some unincorporated ones, and we are focusing on the small communities, a couple hundred people or whatever. Why can't we focus more on 30,000 people — on the whole Yukon? What do we want for the Yukon? For the communities, they have a chief and council or community parliament. They can do their own, but we should be mainly interested, especially these days, with global warming and whatever. How can we protect our Yukon? How can we see a future for the Yukon?

Chair: I'm going to leave us there with that question hanging in the air. Lenore, you're up next. Thank you, Werner.

Ms. Morris: Hi. I didn't prepare anything before tonight, but I've been inspired by all of the earlier speakers today. I'm going to start by saying thank you to the Committee. I think that you're doing a great job. I did listen to some of the hearings with experts, which was very educational. I don't think it got as much publicity as maybe it should have, and I'm going to go off from there and point out that I am in favour of a citizens' assembly, in part because it is complicated and it is new — it's really new for people, and even lots of people who might say, "Yes, I don't like first-past-the-post", but then they don't realize that maybe there's like 10 or 12 different other options and variations within each, and I think it's really important that we get a group of people, a widely representative group of people, to really study the issue — the way the three of you have, obviously, but all of you are representing parties, and I think it's important that it be non-partisan.

On that subject, one of the reasons why I am in favour of moving to some proportional representation system is because we have a system that basically only works well when there are two parties, and if there are more than two, as we have, it just doesn't work very well, and it hasn't worked very well for a long time, because we have had more than two major parties in Canada for a century.

I'm going to say something briefly about referendums. We have seen voting reform referendums taking place and reforms getting voted down a number of times, and I would like to avoid that either by not having a referendum or by delaying it, the way it has been done in some places, until after people have tried a new system. As was mentioned earlier, there is always bias in favour of the devil you know rather than the devil that you don't know, and there's inertia, too. People will just stick with what they know. I'm old enough to remember the Charlottetown Accord, which was a constitutional reform proposal in Canada that had almost universal support at a high level and which was put to a vote by Canadians, and we voted it down, and we have still not gotten constitutional reform since.

I don't want that to happen. I think it's because it is complex, and not everybody is going to be as willing as everybody in this room is to put the hard work into learning the systems so that they can make an informed vote — that there's a real risk of simply, even a really good proposal, being voted no on.

Lastly, I am going to comment a little bit on your materials. I see them out there all places, and they pop up on Facebook and all over the place. I don't think they have been as educational as they could have been, but I do give you full marks for having them out there, and I do really appreciate that we're doing this at all and that all three of you are doing a really difficult job and being open to hearing from people like us. So, thank you.

Chair: Thank you, Lenore. Any questions?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I have some questions.

Chair: Short questions, just so we can get through the list. More people signed up.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Great. Is it your sense, Lenore, that this citizens' assembly, which would be able to deal with the complexity then, but even before we get there, if they were to recommend a referendum, you would still say, "No, don't do it"? Do you know what I mean? Do we trust that assembly to do that?

Ms. Morris: I trust them to do that. It seems unlikely to me that would be something they would recommend, given the recent history here in Canada of voting reform referendums failing.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Okay, thanks.

Chair: I'm going to move on. Thank you, Lenore.

Our break has encouraged people to sign up. Joline, if you would come to the microphone, please.

Ms. Beauregard: Hello, my name is Joline Beauregard, and I use "she/her" pronouns. I also did not prepare anything for tonight, but the discussion earlier got me thinking as well. I think that having a citizens' assembly in some form does make a lot of sense to me, just because it does involve more voices. As the discussion unfolded about that before the break, it brought up more and more questions for me that I think need to be considered in this process as well, one of them being that it's not just the geography in the Yukon that makes us diverse and different.

Certainly, we had some great opinions, and I'm very grateful for all the years of work and education that people in this room have put into their opinions, and I don't think that can be over-spoken at all, but certainly nobody in this room is working their third or fourth job right now. Very likely, nobody in this room is a single mom. There are very few people in this room who are not white. There are very few young people in this room. There are very likely very few queer people in this room, and I think that we need to be very careful to include all of those voices, in addition to people from different geographic areas and people from First Nation communities.

That is one huge consideration that hasn't been mentioned yet. I think I'll leave it at that for now. I have many other thoughts that are just not quite ready to be said yet, I don't think — yes, I'll leave it at that for now. Thank you.

Chair: Thank you, Joline.

One could suggest that your questions just deserve a mic-drop and you could have walked away from the microphone at that point. I thank you for the suggestions, and you're right. That is something that we're grappling with: How do we reach out to the communities you have just listed, making sure that we're not just talking about geography, but we're actually talking about lived experience?

So, it's really valid, and I'm glad that you got up to share that.

Any questions?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Yes. Thank, Joline. One of the things we were talking about — how to try to make sure, if there were a citizens' assembly, that it would be inclusive and representative, so one of the ways that was talked about is making it random, but there is always a bias toward people who want to come forward. So, just your thoughts about how to achieve — if you have any — about how to achieve that more

diverse assembly so that it would be more representative of Yukoners.

Ms. Beauregard: Yes, I think that the first thing that comes to mind is — and I don't have an answer necessarily for how this would be resourced — but I do think it's very important that some sort of compensation is given to the people on the committee, because it is good and well for white, middle-class folks to be able to do that and to be able to take the time off to do that, and there are many, many people in the Yukon who don't look or live like that.

I think it would also be important that we are not focusing just on getting those diverse voices from some of the non-profits in the Yukon who represent them. We have some really, really great organizations, like Queer Yukon and — there are so many, but those organizations don't necessarily represent every person in those communities either, so I think that is a consideration.

I also think that — I think that is probably my biggest answer, making sure that they are accessible in that way and compensated in some way to make it more accessible.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you.

Chair: Thank you, Joline. That was exactly something actually that BC said, that people need to be compensated for what they were doing, right? To make sure that we didn't exclude people who couldn't financially participate, so thank you very much for bringing those comments forward.

Ms. Beauregard: Thank you.

Chair: Mr. Skelton.

Mr. Skelton: Thanks very much for the group here exploring the idea of electoral reform. Thank you for all of the speakers, for tossing their ideas forward. So much — the reason I didn't say anything before was because everything I wanted to say was being touched upon, but new stuff has come forward, so I'm going to comment on that anyway.

First of all, the idea that students learn about just politics, learn about voting through intellectual processes, academic processes, and experiential processes where they get to vote is absolutely essential. One of the other things is, looking around this room, I am so disappointed, because as you said — I think Joline — that it was, you know, we are white bread for the most part, and that is not a citizens' committee. So, it has to be built in. One of the things — it was mentioned that compensation has to happen. One other thing is that this is important stuff. It needs to be considered as jury duty. So, you get called, you have to come, unless you have some amazing reason not to come.

So, compensation and a legal requirement are how I would make this citizens' committee as random as possible. There are some ideas for you.

Chair: Thank you. Mr. Streicker?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: If we were to try to make a law to make a citizens' assembly something that would be legal, like some sort of requirement, that would require work at the Legislative Assembly and would take time. I have also heard tonight sort of a desire to keep this moving. So just noting, if we don't have a law, if you had to choose between the time to make a law around a citizens' assembly or — we can do things,

I'm sure, like compensation and randomness, but what we probably can't do is compel people.

So, if you had to choose, David, between moving it a little faster and getting it going now or taking the time to make a law, your sense?

Mr. Skelton: Is it either or? Like, can we move it forward and, you know, get my bus, I have to go catch my bus, but move it forward as best as possible, and then you refine it —

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Over time.

Mr. Skelton: — with different legislation.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you.

Mr. Skelton: That would be my way.

Chair: I appreciate your time. Thanks for your time. Don't apologize.

So, we have two speakers left on the list and about 13 and a half minutes, so we are doing it, everyone. Spence Hill.

Is Spence still here? There in the back.

Ms. Hill: My name is Spence Hill, and I would sum up what I have to say as this is urgent. This is probably one of the most important questions facing our democracy at this time because of the increasing polarization that we see in our society. If people believe that the government represents them, perhaps we can heal this split that is happening. We have to, because the real issue isn't our democracy: It's our survival with climate change. If we do not have a government that people really believe in and trust, we are not going to be able to address climate change.

Kate said that the response to the survey was overwhelming. I think it's fabulous that 6,000 people persevered, because as has been pointed out, it was not a model of clear communication, and it was not a simple task to complete the survey. I think you may not get any meaningful results from it because it was challenging and convoluted, but the fact that more than 6,000 people responded communicates the urgency of this issue.

People want their government — especially here in this little microcosm we live in — they want their government to represent them, when 6,000 people cared enough to do that. I support a citizens' assembly, and I appreciate what people have said about it needing to be balanced and well-thought-out and educated and that they need to take their time, but not too much time. We have to move on electoral reform soon, fast. This is urgent. We're going to lose that moment of being able to regain the trust of people.

We need action. Some people don't bother to vote because they're so disillusioned. If the system reflected their vote and perhaps if voting was compulsory and it included 16-year-olds and we had mixed member proportional representation, then maybe we'll survive.

Chair: Thank you, Spence. I just want you to know that you made the comment about polarization and the room stopped and they wanted to clap, but they were trying to recover from it. I want you to know everyone heard what you said there. That was poignant, and I saw people react, and I wanted you to know that you just didn't say without us feeling. We felt that.

I'm going to ask the first question, actually, because compulsory voting — the first time I saw that, I lived in Australia. It was a \$100 fine if you didn't vote, so people complained about their government, but by golly, they elected them, so it changed that conversation. I think it's an interesting one similar to what David said about: Do we make it like jury duty, if we go that way? I think maybe that's a conversation, if we strike a citizens' assembly, that will be one of the things.

I just want to thank you for those comments. John?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Spence, I know you have dealt in communication for a long time, and at the break, we were talking about the importance of educating and making sure that it's simple, and I just wonder if you can expand a bit your thoughts on how to take something — I referred to electoral systems as beguiling: They look simple, and yet they get complex. So, if you had suggestions to us for the record?

Ms. Hill: KISS.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Keep it simple?

Ms. Hill: Keep it simple, stupid.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Okay.

Ms. Hill: So yes, a citizens' assembly has virtue because it is of the people, and they will know to keep it simple, even if they have somebody like David Brekke on the citizens' assembly, who can do the math 16 times. I used to glaze over, Dave, when you talked, but you know what? The essence of what you said always shone through, and that's what communication has to be. Keep it — boil it down to the essence, and I think a citizens' assembly will assist in doing that.

You guys know politics far more intimately than the 6,000 people who answered the survey, so of course you're going to write mind-numbing stuff. It's true, and everybody needs an editor. That's the other thing.

Chair: On that note, thank you.

Mr. Cathers: Just before you go, Spence —

Chair: Spence, can you come back? We have one last quick question.

Mr. Cathers: I appreciated your point about the growing polarization in society, and I think that is really a challenge and a threat right across the country, where regardless of what viewpoint you hold within the total spectrum, I think it's fair to say — and there's a lot of information to show — that Canadian society is more divided than it has been at any time in the past, and that, I would agree with you, is not a good thing.

My question would be, when it comes down to — you were suggesting that this would help with polarization. There are some, though, as I'm sure you know, that one of the criticisms of proportional systems is they can make it easier for fringe parties, or fringe candidates, including potentially ones with more radical views, to get elected. Do you have any suggestions for how to avoid that unintended outcome, if there were a move toward some sort of proportional model?

Ms. Hill: Even the fringe has to be represented, but proportionality should level that out, balance that out. I am not a mathematician. Ask Dave.

Mr. Cathers: Thanks.

Chair: So, Mr. Brekke, you have two minutes to add your comment that you wanted to add before, and then I'm going to wrap it up.

Mr. Brekke: I was just wanting to mention the idea of 16-year-olds who are going to live with and pay for the decisions of our elected representatives.

Chair: I don't think he needed the two minutes. That was a well-made point.

I thank everybody today in helping us with our very first public hearing on this issue. I urge you to join us on September 7. We'll be in a much bigger room, and by that point, we will be seasoned public hearing veterans. We'll have been around the territory.

So, before I adjourn this hearing, I'd like to say a few words on behalf of the Committee. First, I would like to thank everyone who presented their thoughts to the Committee, because this isn't always easy, and we appreciate that you did. I would also like to thank the Yukoners who are listening or watching this hearing, either now live or in the future, as it will be recorded and posted on the website.

The Committee will be hearing from Yukoners at more community hearings in the future, and we will do a better job of advertising those. Information on those public hearings, as well as transcripts and recordings, will be available on the Committee's webpage at yukonassembly.ca/SCER. The public can learn more about potential voting systems at howyukonvotes.ca.

Thank you very much. This hearing is now adjourned.

The Committee adjourned at 7:54 p.m.