

Teslin Meeting of Yukon Special Committee on Electoral Reform

Comments on 2022 08 06

Teslin Presenters: Chief of Teslin Tlingit Council, Eric Morris; Mayor, Gord Curran; Jenny Roberts; Doug Martin; Juanita Kremer; and J.P. Pinard all spoke impressively to me.

It was interesting that all speakers expressed the high value of working together collaboratively in an inclusive community with a balance of power and respect for differences, beginning with Chief Eric Morris and Mayor Gord Curran. They expressed how dysfunctional governance was, without a balance of power – majority governments with 100% power, elected with 40% of votes cast, that cannot be held accountable until the end of their five-year term.

Jenny Roberts, young enough to remember her sixteenth year, also suggested seventeen as the age to begin voting. That sounded well thought out to me. How about you? Jenny also expressed the need to feel a connection with her MLA.

Doug Martin spoke of Switzerland and how engaged the Swiss are with direct democracy. He pointed out how the Swiss feel ownership of their democracy. This is something I have previously heard from treasured Swiss friends.

Juanita Kremer spoke strongly for at least one additional seat in Ross River and Faro so that constituents and MLAs do not need to drive several hundred kilometers to personally meet with each other. This proposal was presented by the most recent Boundaries Commission and rejected by a majority government who had the power and used their power to reject it.

JP Pinard spoke very highly about Michael Lauer's most recent submission to the Committee called CITIZENS ASSEMBLY POTENTIAL MAKEUP. After seeing Michael's thoroughness - even giving a proposed selection process similar to juries, a structure for the assembly and estimated costs, I can see why JP was so positive. Although I appreciated Michael's focus on inclusiveness, I believe that the assembly should have considerably more youth representation. I am confident that the assembly members will be collaborating more or less effectively with all members.

Inclusiveness of youth is a major concern of many voters with whom I have spoken, so I propose that the assembly be more inclusive of youth. The young people of today are going to inherit the proposed system. Some presently are aware of politics. Many more could benefit from increasing their awareness.

I am proposing that consideration be given to having two high school representatives from each high school in the Yukon. However, I want to avoid having too large an assembly, so I think that these representatives can be part of community/ constituency/ First Nation representation.

To encourage responsible teamwork engagement with all Yukoners, I recommend that all groups have at least two committee members. This will mean invite one more non-binary representative, two from the Individual Learning Centre, and two from late Nicole Edwards' BYTE (Bringing Youth Towards Equality).

Respectfully submitted.

Looking forward,
Dave Brekke, former Yukon Returning Officer

Ps. This Teslin meeting brought forward relative ideas expressed in former Governor General David Johnston's book, **TRUST** TWENTY WAYS TO BUILD A BETTER COUNTRY. Quote: *"Organizations should not want merely to invite people to the dance. They should make every effort to get people out on the dance floor, engaged in a common activity and using that activity to build trust."*

As you may know, our present First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) electoral system reduces trust. It invites all qualified voters to vote, but only gives their vote representation when they vote for the elected MLA in their riding. Less than half the voters who cast ballots in federal, provincial and territorial elections are represented in their Parliament / Legislature. Truly representative democracy??

Also, for more inclusive representation in community elections, communities might want to reconsider party politics to ensure balance of power and collaboration using a mixed-member-proportional electoral system.