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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL REFORM

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Wednesday, September 7, 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: Juliette Belisle Greetham
Keegan Newnham-Boyd
Daniel Sokolov
Bob Sharp
Sara McPhee-Knowles
Bill Barnie
Patrick Rouble
Dave Brekke
Chris Balzer
Sue Greetham
JP Pinard
Sally Wright
Sarah Newton
Don Roberts
Peter Coates
Gerald Haase
Eric DeLong
Marguerite Tölgyeci
Dario Paola
Francis van Kessel
Bonnie Duffee
Mervyn Williams

EVIDENCE**Whitehorse, Yukon****Wednesday, September 7, 2022 — 6:00 p.m.**

Chair (Ms. White): Hello and welcome. If I can ask people to take their seats, please? It will be easier.

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

We are piloting a remote live interpretation service tonight. Ce soir, nous faisons l'essai d'un service d'interprétation simultanée à distance. En téléchargeant une application, vous pouvez écouter les discussions et y participer en français. Pour les personnes dans la salle qui désirent en faire l'essai, vous pouvez vous adresser à un membre du personnel de Legislative Assembly Direction des services en français, près de l'entrée de Legislative Assembly salle. Comme le service est offert sur une application mobile, vous devrez utiliser votre téléphone et des écouteurs. Nous en avons des supplémentaires si vous en avez besoin. Pour les personnes participantes sur Zoom, veuillez suivre les consignes d'utilisation sur le chat.

By downloading an app, you can listen to and participate in this hearing in French. For those in the room who wish to try it out, please refer to a French Language Services Directorate staff member near the room's entrance. As the service is offered through a mobile application, you need to use your phone and headphones. We have extra ones should you need them. For participants on Zoom, please follow the instructions on the chat to access the French interpretation.

This public hearing is scheduled for 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. tonight. It is possible that not all the people who wish to speak will have an opportunity to present today. Additional in-person public hearings are being held in other Yukon communities. The Committee will be holding hearings in Mayo and Carmacks next week, and remote participation by videoconference is available for those hearings.

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. The deadline for written submissions is September 30, 2022.

Allow me to introduce the members of the Committee. My name is Kate White; I am 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 examine 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 an 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 today at the entrance table.

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 those 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 — that's 17.1 percent of Yukoners 16 and over. A report on the results of the survey is available on the Committee's webpage.

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

If you would like to present your opinion to the Committee, please ensure that you have signed in at the registration table. 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. If you are participating by Zoom, you can send a chat message to the Clerk to be added to the list of presenters. If you need technical help with Zoom, please call 867-334-2448.

Individual presentations to the Committee will be limited to five minutes for the first six people who have pre-registered, and as our list grows, we will be looking to moving that to three minutes for each presentation. If there is time remaining at the end of the presentations, presenters may be invited to speak for a second time.

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 mute any electronic devices, and when you are called to speak, please come up to the microphone.

Our first speaker today is Juliette Belisle Greetham.

Just at the microphone, please, and just so everyone knows, there are cameras facing, so while you speak into that microphone, you will be Zoomed and transmitted, and that's what we will be keeping, so I'll ask you to face the Committee when you present. Whenever you're ready, Juliette.

Ms. Greetham: Hello, I'm Juliette Greetham. I am co-leader of Vote 16 Yukon, and I will share our mission on behalf of our committee. We aim to lower the municipal and territorial voting age in the Yukon to 16 years old to encourage youth to become more involved and educated in local politics that affect them. It is essential to start them off young. Studies show that

the sooner you start voting, the more likely it is to become a habit.

In our last federal election, there was only a 62-percent voter turnout. This demonstrates how we need a change in our society to have citizens involved in elections. Education and empowerment are key to solving this dysfunction. The Yukon school board should include in our curriculum education about how to vote, education and research on the Yukon political parties, the structure of our local government, and give youth a non-biased environment for them to form their own opinions.

Some of you may still not be convinced 16-year-olds should be able to vote, but you can't deny that they are contributing to society. A lot of us have jobs where we are taxed on our earnings without having any voting power to effect change in our government. That is taxation without representation. We have legal self-autonomy laws, like being able to work without needing parental consent, paying work-related taxes, legally having the choice to leave school and home, entitlement to consent to our own medical treatment, we can enrol in the armed forces, we can be tried as an adult in court, as well as having the opportunity to acquire a driver's licence, giving us the responsibility of keeping ourselves and others safe on the road. A 16-year-old's responsibility for self and contributing to society should have the same rights and privileges as others with whom we share the same duties.

Studies show that, by 16, what is known as "co-cognition" is fully developed, which is a concept that you are able to process information and make a decision more likely to involve logic and critical analysis. We are intellectually equipped to consider the consequences of our actions and those of society. We deal with the systemic effects of family and community dysfunction, and we worry and care about our future. We deserve to have a say in the laws that affect us. We deserve a vote.

Help us move from powerlessness to empowerment. Yukon youth is our future; we are old enough to vote.

Thank you for listening to my electoral reform speech.

Chair: Juliette, can I ask you back to the microphone, please?

Also, for other people presenting today, I'll ask you to stay at the microphone in case there are questions from the Committee members, and when we're done, I'll let you know. Mr. Streicker?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you very much for your presentation. I recall when you spoke to us previously. I'm wondering if you can just describe the group a little bit and who you are representing today with that group.

Ms. Greetham: Absolutely. So, Vote16.ca is a national movement that has been ongoing since 2015, I believe, and independent Senator Marilou McPhedran passed a vote — she was working toward passing Bill 201 to allow 16-year-olds to vote, and it has not yet passed, but this committee exists and we want to make it happen, and we want your support to allow 16-year-olds to vote.

In the Yukon, our committee, Vote 16 Yukon, was recently started, and I am co-leader with Keegan Newnham-Boyd. We also work with Ben Sanders, and we've been making petitions,

talking on the news, going through interviews for the newspaper. We just really want to have our voice heard, and we want representation, and we hope that the Yukon can be a leader in Canada for making these changes.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you.

Ms. Greetham: Thank you for your time.

Chair: Just one quick follow-up. So, when you first presented in August, it was not expected; you hadn't planned.

Ms. Greetham: No.

Chair: So since you first presented in August, you've organized, you've found other like-minded youth, and you've signed them?

Ms. Greetham: Yes, I have. I have done more research, and I've got way more emotionally invested in this, because I really think that this is a change that could really benefit society as a whole.

Chair: Thank you for presenting.

Ms. Greetham: Thank you.

Chair: Sorry, and just to correct the record, it was May 30 the first time we met in Whitehorse.

Next up, we have Keegan Newnham-Boyd.

Mr. Newnham-Boyd: Hello. Is this good? Okay. My name's Keegan Newnham-Boyd. I'm with Juliette as the other co-leader of Vote 16 Yukon. I just want to start my speech, words, whatever you want to call this, with thanking her, as I think she's already made the same case as I'm about to make.

Vote 16 Yukon, to me, is something that isn't an outside movement, something that people can brush to the side. I believe that this is something that we need to do. I mean, as Juliette has said, at 16, most youth have the responsibilities that are almost the same as an 18-year-old, and we need to prepare our youth for when they're 18. As I said recently, while talking with CKRW, when youth turn 18, whether you want to call them "youth" still or not, they often move away from home. Most people in our Canadian society go to university, they go to college, they move for a job, and when you move away from the community you were raised in, you tend to lose touch with the politics of your local region, and you are not as prepared to vote. Right? A lot of people — we know our voting turnouts are not 100 percent, and that is something that I believe can be changed by bringing more youth into the voting age at a younger age, because when you start voting younger, it does become a habit.

Thank you.

Chair: Thanks, Keegan.

Next up, we have Daniel Sokolov.

Mr. Sokolov: Good evening; thank you for having me. My name is Daniel Sokolov. I'm a resident of Whitehorse, and I've had the opportunity to be an election officer from coast to coast in this country for many years, anything from local elections to territorial, federal, First Nation — I've worked in any role you'll find in a voting location.

So, I wanted to share some of my experience that I've made along the front lines, serving thousands of voters over a decade. I was hoping you had some questions in that area. Just to be clear, I do not represent any electoral authority I've worked for

in the past, so whatever I say is my own opinion, and it's informed by my own experience.

I'm also not affiliated with any political party or group in this matter.

I think the most important lesson that I've learned on the front lines is KISS, so a keep it simple system. Nobody wants to feel like an idiot in anything, and if you go somewhere and you feel like an idiot, you're unlikely to come back, because it was a bad experience. So, that does not mean we can't have a different way of filling in a ballot, but it has to be a simple system. Keep in mind, we have a large number of voters, especially in our territory, who are not functionally able to read and write. I have people come in who don't know the name of the candidate or the party affiliation, they just know a certain aspect of that person, and they tell me, and I have to try and guide them, help them in a way to find out which of the candidates they mean. I can't tell them, vote for Bob or Susan, but I can give them some — for example, I can tell them where the candidates live, in which village. Now, that may inform the vote: Oh no, I don't want the person who lives in village A; I want someone from village B. Right? This is all public information I can share.

Now imagine such a voter having to go and rank those candidates. That's a really bad experience for that voter. He or she has no idea what to do. We also have voters who physically have a hard time — whether they're old or they have some handicap, they're blind or they have a motor issue — have a hard time filling in, making one checkmark on a ballot. Now imagine they have to put three or five things on that ballot. It's not a good experience for them, it will take a lot more time for them, they are prone to make more errors, and that means they are less likely to come again next time, because it didn't feel good for them.

It just feels too frustrating and maybe even intimidating, because more people will have to ask for help. That's not a nice thing; you want to be your own voter and go and vote without somebody helping you. So, it is really important to keep it simple.

Another issue I see with ranked voting is that it is harder for an elector, for a voter, to find out how their vote exactly was counted. Which candidate did they actually end up supporting or not supporting? And then there are some effects where voters often don't know all the parties and all the candidates on the list. They may not even know one, but maybe they know a few, so they know which ones they kind of like, which ones they don't like, and then the others they've never heard of, and chances are they might end up in the middle of the ballot of this voter, because: I don't like Bob at all; I love Susan, but this Mike, I don't know, so let's put him in the middle.

Now, in this very small electoral group that we sometimes have in the Yukon, that can lead to random results. That can lead to people being elected although the people who ended up voting for them didn't know who they were, just had to put somebody in the middle of their ballot. I think that is a real issue we have to keep in mind.

I was wondering if you had any questions on that.

Chair: I'm going to ask a question.

Sorry, Mr. Brekke; it's just the Committee. We're the only ones who get to ask the questions today.

Just based on some of the presentations, you're against a ranked ballot.

Mr. Sokolov: Yes.

Chair: Sure.

Mr. Sokolov: I think it overwhelms a lot of voters, and then of course, after the voting, after the ballot is in the box, it also makes the counting a lot more complex, unless we use voting machines. I think, with voting machines, they would be very expensive for the Yukon to transport them to the communities, to make sure there's power, to keep them secure 24/7. I mean, we have a really hard time finding secure locations for voting; we have a hard time finding staff in the communities, which has various reasons — one of them is the low pay; another one is a lack of — I've experienced not really good protection by the RCMP for elections staff.

Another problem is we're voting on a Monday. It would be a lot easier to vote on a Sunday to recruit staff, to find voting locations. Also, the Yukon has a pretty long requirement to be a resident of the Yukon before you can be an elections officer. The last election, we had people from Atlin who wanted to work for us; we couldn't hire them. We had people who already lived here but only for four months; we couldn't hire them.

So, there are many reasons, but the voting, the counting of a ballot in a ranked ballot would be a lot more complex for the staff, who are very tired after a 15-hour day. That's when the counting starts.

So, that's another reason, but my main focus is really the experience for the voter. I want voters to come back. I want them to have a good experience, to feel like they have achieved something, and that does not mean we have to stay with the current system.

In the brochure, you have the mixed system; you have the proportional representation system. I think they're both very simple systems to understand and to execute for any elector.

Chair: Thank you, Daniel.

Next up we have Bob Sharp.

Mr. Sharp: Thank you. So pleased to be here. I've been an educator in the Yukon for more than 50 years, and I'm not going to pretend I'm going to quote what students say, and I'm not going to represent their point of view, but I'm going to comment on more than 50 years of observations.

You face a conundrum. Each of you represents a party. That party has a set of policies and principles that they talk about, but there's lack of clarity in some of those, and to suggest that any member of the population would agree with one party's policies entirely and not the others is a problem. What you face — basically, we hear students say, I don't trust them; if their lips are moving, they're not telling the truth. You've heard this over time. The problem you have and the problem I've been working with for more than 50 years is a problem of engagement. How do we get people really actively involved so that they feel that what happens is important?

I'm afraid that, with reference to the last comments, we're in such a small jurisdiction — John, I remember you coming to my door, and I said, well, you know, I know the last person

really well, and I have great faith in their spirit and their integrity, as I now have in yours. So, it's really not that big — we're in large part many small communities, and if you want to really represent people, you have to make them feel that their vote is not lost, that they can be listened to and heard.

I hear students comment on minority governments, saying that's the best thing that can happen to us, because we see compromise and working through things. In my classrooms, that's what I want to see kids do, is work together in collaboration. I remember going, a number of years ago, with a class to the Legislative Assembly, and I was embarrassed, and we left before it was finished. I listened to the dialogue that happened during Question Period; people weren't listening, people were — it was offensive. It failed to meet a fundamental principle we have of a democracy where we're trying to solve problems of our community. The case I would put to you is we need another kind of system that every person feels their vote counts.

Some of you didn't get 50 percent of the vote in your riding. In fact, only six people in the last election got more than half of the vote.

Time's up? I'm sorry. After 50-some years of teaching, you kind of lose track of time.

The point I'm making is that we need to find a different kind of model that lets every young person and every old person feel that they have a chance to say. I take exception with the previous comment, because you're old doesn't mean you can't be well-informed or that you're going to be confused by checking off a one, two on election. I represent this person, my first choice, that person, the policies and the principles they're articulating and that individual personality we know — because we know them all in these kinds of jurisdictions — really speak to a different kind of model of election.

Thank you.

Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sharp. I'm sorry I distracted you, but when you said there were six people who reached over 50 percent of the vote, two of us are at the table.

Mr. Sharp: I realize that; I looked at that.

Chair: Just as a follow-up, do you have a suggestion or a recommendation of a system you would like us to look at?

Mr. Sharp: In my experience in classrooms, if young people say, we want to do something, you talk about it. First of all, we find an answer. So if John wasn't elected, I would have given my second vote to another individual, if I had a second choice. So that preferential model, to my way of thinking, at least the individual gets a chance to say, those are the principles that come closer to articulating what I'm looking for.

When I listen to people talk about a minority government, they say that compromise comes closer to the kind of goals that I had as a principal.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Bob. Given that it's three politicians that you're presenting to, do you have a suggestion about the process? If we were to get to electoral change, what do you think the process should be?

Mr. Sharp: Well, like I said, you have a conundrum, not to put too fine a point to it, and this is the real test of you — not just the three of you on the Committee. Can you find, in a

collaborative process, working together across those party lines, a way in which to make it work? Now, that's the true essence of cooperation. That's what we look for in our classrooms, for gosh sake, and it shouldn't be any different from our state of governance.

You have a problem, and I think the first thing is to recognize you have a problem, because you come with a particular set of principles and policies each of your parties define. Can you find common ground? That's my challenge to you.

Mr. Cathers: Thanks, and I just want to, if I may, just note, I'm not going to ask a lot of questions at this stage, since we have a lot of speakers, unless there's a need for clarification, but thanks to you and the previous presenters. I appreciate you sharing your thoughts.

Chair: Thank you, Mr. Sharp.

Next up is Sara McPhee-Knowles.

Ms. McPhee-Knowles: Hi, everybody. Thanks very much for the opportunity to speak to the Committee tonight on electoral reform. As Kate said, I'm Sara McPhee-Knowles. I hold a PhD in public policy from the University of Saskatchewan, and I'm an instructor at Yukon U. To be clear tonight, I'm just here as a Yukoner, not in any official capacity representing the university.

I'm not an expert in electoral reform, but it's a topic that I cover in one of my introductory political studies classes, and so it's one that I'm really interested in. I'm so pleased to see that electoral reform is getting more attention here in the Yukon now.

What I wanted to talk about to you, the Committee, tonight is options. Although our current first-past-the-post system is very simple to understand, as a previous presenter noted, and it makes it very fast to announce results, which we all appreciate on election day, the lack of proportionality is a problem for democracy. Voters feel that their vote is wasted if they cast their ballot for a candidate who doesn't win in their riding, and that can also reduce voter turnout, which is a concern we've also previously heard.

It can also exacerbate regional divides. I don't think that's something we've seen extensively in the Yukon up to this point, but there was a very stark example in the 1993 federal election. The Bloc Québécois won 52 with 13.5 percent of the popular vote, and the Conservative Party lost party status, actually, and were reduced to only two seats with 16 percent of the popular vote.

Personally, I would prefer to see the current system replaced with either a dual member proportional or mixed member proportional system. Both of these systems are relatively simple to implement, compared to a single transferable vote, and they maintain the advantage of geographic representation. This is really important in a jurisdiction like the Yukon, where we have Whitehorse as a large urban centre and many smaller rural ridings who have different needs and concerns. This shift would also improve proportionality.

In dual member proportional, each local district elects two representatives. The first seat goes to the candidate with the

most votes, as in first-past-the-post, and a second seat is won by another district candidate so that the result is proportional across the region. This maintains a single-ballot system, so it's more straightforward, and it also includes smaller districts than some proportional systems.

In mixed member proportional, candidates are elected from larger local ridings than in a first-past-the-post system, but some are elected from a list based on the popular vote. This list is set up as two ballots where one vote is cast for your riding's representative and one for a party that you prefer, in most cases. This additional list also offers better proportionality, as well as the opportunity to increase representation of women and other historically excluded groups. This system is used for national elections in New Zealand and in Germany, as well as in the UK for the devolved parliaments of Scotland and Wales.

Thank you.

Chair: Thank you. Mr. Streicker?

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you for those. Can I just ask about the — on the two, on the proportionality, when we've heard from people who vote MMP, one of the ways to do it is to add seats to the Legislature, and one of the ways to do it is to switch to a list on some. Your thinking?

Ms. McPhee-Knowles: I think if you were going to maintain your geographic representation, you would likely have to move to somewhat larger ridings. I heard some work that said they would have to be about 67-percent larger in mixed member proportional systems, and then you would also have some ridings that are based on the list. You likely would need more seats or a different division of the current 19 seats in your Legislature.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you.

Chair: One of the things we've heard from rural communities is their real concern about being amalgamated or kind of sucked in toward the centre, so they talk about the importance of representation. So, just in your example you used about the ridings needing to be about 67-percent bigger, so you would lose the number of that, do you see either or those systems that you proposed, that you commented on — being the mixed member or the dual member — as being able to still have, for example, the 19 ridings?

Ms. McPhee-Knowles: I think if you wanted to maintain your current set-up of rural ridings the way they currently are, you would want to add more seats.

Chair: Thank you.

I've just been asked — the interpreters can't follow along when we speak too fast. When we're in the Legislative Assembly and Hansard is working, they can slow us down as they transcribe, but the real-life action is going a bit fast, so they have just asked if we can slow our pace. We have plenty of time.

Next up, we have Bonnie Duffee, if you're in the room.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: I didn't see Bonnie.

Chair: All right, Bill Barnie, you're next up.

Mr. Barnie: Let me start by saying I'm totally unprepared. Kate roped me into this thing at the doorway. It's okay, Kate, but you know, I hear people describing our present system with derision and calling it "first-past-the-post" like it's

a dog race or something like that, and other things I heard said is if you vote for somebody and they don't get in, your vote is wasted or somehow you don't feel that you've been represented.

It's an election. Not everybody is going to vote for the winner. The other thing that I hear that's also troubling to me is we'll just get more members out here. We'll expand the number of people, so that if I vote for some person and they don't get elected, somehow that vote will magically morph — move around until somebody else is going to get in there as a result of my vote, even though the person that I voted for didn't get elected.

So, I'm a little bit concerned about a bias against the system that we have today. I hear "first-past-the-post" — it's a derogatory term. I think our elections are very democratic. Of course, we don't all get our people elected, but I know who I'm voting for. My vote is for a person who will represent me in my riding, and I don't want it to be anything else. I don't want it to evolve or morph or do anything like that. I get to select the person who will represent me in my riding. If he doesn't get elected, it doesn't matter. The person who is representing me in my riding doesn't know who I voted for. That's why elections are secret ballots.

So, I'll go to my representative, even if I didn't elect him or vote for them, and I'll use that person, and that's the great thing about a democracy: Our people represent us.

I really don't want anything — I want it very, very clear in this election system who we can vote for; we can only vote for people who represent our riding, and it's not going to magically, because of some committee's formula, turn into something else.

If you want a change in an electoral system, we should be looking at the city's electoral system. Now, that's a system that really needs to change. They have an at-large election. Nobody represents anybody. It is just a hodge-podge. Out of the 30 or so candidates that you have there, you end up with six councillors, and there's an awards system, so there's no responsibility of those people to represent a certain number of people or a group of people or the interest of people. That's a system that needs to change.

The one that we have now, I'm quite happy with it. I'm very proud of our electoral system, and I believe it's very derogative, and if the person who you voted for doesn't get elected, you didn't waste your vote; there were just many, many more people who disagreed with you, and that's what democracy is all about.

Thank you very much.

Chair: Thank you, Mr. Barnie. Don't walk away; come on back. Thank you.

I do appreciate that you did take me up on the challenge. The reason why, when you came in, is you had said similar things. It's important that your view is here and it's transcribed and it's part of the record. And so, I do appreciate that very much, and I appreciate your opinions about the municipal governments; however, you are speaking to territorial representatives, and we can't change the municipal one, but I will look — no? Okay. So, thank you for coming.

Next up is Patrick Rouble.

Mr. Rouble: Hello, folks. Thanks very much for coming out and engaging with folks. You have a challenging position being representatives, and it's an interesting topic tonight of democracy and how do we collectively make the best decisions for the Yukon, for us, for all the stuff that goes on around us.

Is there a job description for an MLA? If there was one, do you think it has lived up to your experience? I don't think so. My first point is, if we don't have a good understanding of the role of our elected officials, how can we spend time trying to find out better ways of who those people should be? If we don't understand what you're supposed to do and what your job actually is, why are we wasting our time trying to select people for these positions?

You're called "representatives", but what does that mean? It's a challenge when you go door to door and knock on people's doors and say, hey, can I count on your support? And they're putting their trust in you, and that's a challenging situation. As their representative, are you expected to act in their best interest, in the best interest of the constituency, or in the best interest of the territory?

I know from my experience, those weren't always simple questions. Should I always use the party philosophy? What happens if I know that there's more information going on? How do I make consensus, then, without breaking my oath of how I said I would respond or how my philosophical orientation led me? How can I actually make a compromise? Isn't that a challenge?

If I compromise and go back on my word and go back to the door and say, yeah, I know I said I was going to do this, but I didn't, but here, let me explain why, that's a pretty good conversation to have, but it's a challenging one. How people elect people in this territory is also challenging. We've heard some of that this evening, where it was based on the personality, based on the philosophy, based on the leader, based on a particular issue — there are lots of things that people consider when making a choice, but often it comes down to: Who is it who I think is the best person to represent me? That's a challenge; that's a challenge when we're starting to look at how we should change how we structure all of this.

Should I vote for people who share the same equity or demographic characteristics as me, the same gender as me, the same orientation as me, the same language as me, the same religious orientation? How do I find someone who's a representative of me? Then, when you're in your shoes of being an MLA, are you then expected to be the voice of that demographic characteristic all of the time? Are you always supposed to be the representative for whatever gender, whatever age, whatever financial position? Are you always supposed to act in the best interest of those people like you? I don't think you are. It's a compromise.

The challenge, though, when we come down to it and say, what is the philosophical orientation that I'm going to use? — that's where I like a party system where people can understand where you're coming from when you make a decision and you can fall back on your philosophy. Does it work all the time? No,

it doesn't. Logic doesn't always prevail; emotions are there; there are all kinds of other factors that influence things.

As well, there's the whole role of how does capital-G government go about gaining information with which to make a decision? With the consultation that goes on, with the analysis that goes on, things don't always come down to that specific — I mean, they come down to it often in votes of party lines, but many of those decisions have already involved lots of other constituents.

So, I'm not going to support proportional representation. I think there are too many challenges with that, but if you have other questions, you've heard my story. My big point is the expectations on our election representatives are pretty high. If we want to change how we select them, we should change what the expectations are.

Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rouble.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you so much for your presentation. Patrick, you said not proportional, and maybe you're also saying it's not so much about what system we have, but rather trying to help people to understand what the role is. But like, are there things that you think we should recommend as improvements to the system, from your experience?

Mr. Rouble: A greater understanding of the role and responsibility of what an MLA can do. I mean, there are a lot of misunderstandings that I'm sure you folks have observed. I mean, are you allowed, as an MLA, to contact a government official and intervene with them? Often, as an MLA, you're asked to act on behalf of a constituent to help them work through a problem, but that's a little bit different from delving into a policy side of things.

There are huge expectations on elected officials about their ability to change and to influence change. Maybe other folks might not always be aware of those limitations. So, some of those things — I mean, the job of an MLA, as it sits right now, is to be in the Assembly 60 days a year and to vote on bills, including the big budget bill, to present and table motions and discuss them, and then, if you pass a motion as a private member, does the government listen? I don't know. Is there an accountability for motions that are passed? How does an MLA influence the operations of government? Because from my experience, it's like steering the *Titanic* with a canoe paddle.

Chair: I'm going to thank you for that. Thank you, Mr. Rouble.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thanks, Patrick.

Chair: Sure, Mr. Brekke.

Mr. Brekke: I'm sorry; I don't have very much to present to you that I haven't already presented, but I hope that what we can result in is an inclusive community, a community where people can feel that they are a part of the community, and I think that's where the mixed member proportional system of New Zealand is really effective. I can just say that some people may not be aware that, in the 2016 election, we ended with a majority government, and applying the New Zealand system, we split the Yukon into three areas: north Yukon, south Yukon, and Whitehorse. And in the Whitehorse area, we had 10 ridings and 32 percent of the vote received one seat; 41 percent received seven seats. Is that democracy?

Chair: Next up, we have Chris Balzer.
[inaudible]

Chair: You did.

Please come on up. Into the microphone, please, Mr. Balzer.

Mr. Balzer: Can you hear me now?

Chair: Yes.

Mr. Balzer: My name is Chris. I have one issue that has been concerning me for quite a while, and that's the business of recall. In my estimation, recall would level the field very well, but a little, right? So, I don't know if you have any questions about that. I didn't really come here with a proposal.

Chair: So, I'm going to start.

Mr. Balzer: Oh, sorry. In addition to recall, the idea of a runoff of candidates is something I think would benefit us all. That would vacate the 42-percent-leadership thing.

Chair: Into the microphone, please.

Mr. Balzer: I'm just looking around the room here, and I don't see a First Nation face in this room. When we talk about inclusion, I've often thought — I'm a retired petty bureaucrat, by the way, and some of my areas of interest were child welfare and the young offender system. I realize those are policy issues, so I won't go on, but I think that we have to be more inclusive with our First Nations. Do I think maybe we should have a senate in the Yukon that includes representation for all its diversity?

There are so many — I'm looking around here, and I just see all people my age. I'll just conclude with — I think that the first speaker tonight was probably the most scientific and observant person to be speaking tonight, and I really liked her arguments about no taxation without representation. I think that's a pretty clear democratic principle that maybe we should address — or maybe not. I don't know.

At any rate, I don't have anything else.

Chair: I do have a question, actually.

When you talk about a recall, the ability to recall, for example, an elected person, what do you envision that being?

Mr. Balzer: Well, okay, let me just tell you all that, in British Columbia and Alberta, I don't know how functional their recall legislation is at present, and the various efforts by the federal government to get their head wrapped around the whole idea of recall doesn't seem to be working out — what was your question, exactly?

Chair: You've proposed recall legislation. So, what do you see that doing?

Mr. Balzer: I think that it would be based on, and I think most of the draft legislation I've ever seen, talk about two things: about politicians, and that is that they could be recalled for malfeasance, okay? Does everybody know what that means? "Malfeasance" is a pseudo-legal term for doing bad things, simply put, okay? There's another aspect of that which would be called "nonfeasance", which is a lesser category of harm — let's see, we would call that perceived harm or injury to the community, to an individual, et cetera. I think of the study of malfeasance as something in the Yukon that has been entirely neglected in my 44 years here.

I don't know if that's an answer. Brad, you've been writing there like crazy. Do you have a question? Or maybe you're writing poetry?

Mr. Cathers: I'm not writing poetry tonight. I have done that before, but not tonight. I was just making note of what you had said, and was just wondering also, in other jurisdictions, if there is a particular model for legislation that you would favour or a particular — some of them include a threshold for a certain percentage of signatures on a petition that would be required to initiate recall of a member. Do you have something in mind for either of those?

Mr. Balzer: Now, that's a policy issue. Now that I'm a retired petty bureaucrat, I don't think long on certain subjects, but that is a policy issue, right? I mean, "malfeasance" has a definition in legalese; "nonfeasance" has a definition. That's as far as I'll take it, because — I haven't looked at cost benefit or any of that other stuff that our bureaucratic brethren and sisterhood undertake.

Mr. Cathers: Thanks.

Chair: Thank you, Mr. Balzer.

Next up we have Sue Greetham.

Ms. Greetham: Thank you again for allowing us to be here. I think the speakers so far, you know, represent to me diverse people and ideas that we have in a small territory like the Yukon. This is one of the reasons we decided to retire to the Yukon, because it was such a diverse, beautifully colourful weave of people with diverse ideas and diverse backgrounds. I think that's of tremendous value to what we have here.

I would like to thank the speakers who have already spoken for their thoughtful, thought-provoking contributions, because this is what happens when you talk to citizens and people and your neighbours, and this is where I think our representatives can find solutions a lot faster, if we all get together as teams.

I know "first-past-the-post" is one of the key words, and many people consider it designed for governments to rule over citizens with partisan-biased decision-making, single-party rule. I was told that when I was about 35. They said — I stood up and asked a question and they said, you elected me; we decide. Well, here I am today.

Alternative systems are designed for citizens to rule through party collaboration, respecting all opinions to a common goal. A citizens' assembly is a calm, educated, citizen-based approach to choosing non-partisan voting systems that would best provide a voice without prejudice.

We've been asked what system we want without the education, expertise, or tools to respond. It's a hollow gift at best to offer something without more background. We need the time to learn what is best for the people before responding to such a question. First, we need a citizens' assembly. I know this is more time, more effort, but it's composed of randomly selected interested citizens representing their own communities to take this research challenge. Their goal is to identify a voting system that will allow non-partisan decision-making within the government.

A citizens' assembly, we have researched over the past period that we're looking at electoral reform. Why would you have one? It provides high-quality decisions developed with the

involvement of everyday citizens for the common good — is at the heart of the process. Decisions are developed by citizens, thanks to the process of random selection. Decisions are made after learning the issue, listening to the people with diverse perspectives and opinions, including our First Nations. Decisions are made with at least 60-percent support of the citizens' assembly.

The process of organizing a citizens' assembly encourages institutions and organizations to search for effective solutions to issues before preparing the recommendations. New possibilities may appear, thanks to a wide range of views and perspectives from our really colourful communities. Inclusive, well-informed transparency is how decisions should be made, so I'm asking for more time, a lot more education, and to go to the citizens for the answers.

Chair: Thank you, Ms. Greetham. One quick question that I have is — you just said that, within what you were talking about for the citizens' assembly, it would require 60 percent of the members to move forward with a decision?

Ms. Greetham: Yes. That's a thought.

Chair: Okay.

Ms. Greetham: As with everyone else in the group, you know, where none of us are professionals and none of us are experts, but we all have lived. I lived in the political realm for 50 years, and I can just see where we could certainly make some improvements. I mean, we're pretty intelligent; we're in a pretty sophisticated age and we have our youth behind us — or in front of us, I hope.

Chair: Thank you, Ms. Greetham.

Next up is JP Pinard.

Mr. Pinard: Thank you. My name is JP Pinard. I'm a long-time Yukoner, and I really appreciate what all the other speakers have said before me. They're all really good ideas, offering different types of voting and lowering the voting age — lots of very good ideas, especially from the one just before me, from Sue, about the citizens' assembly.

I strongly support the creation of a citizens' assembly, because it's randomly selected from citizens. We're looking for a cross-section of individuals who we want to be represented by this citizens' assembly, and it allows for a lot of education and discussions to be done. I recommend — and this is because we need that citizens' assembly because it's a neutral body. You are elected by us, and you are an employee, so it doesn't make sense that you, as our employee, should decide how we actually vote for you; it should be done by the citizens who are selected for this assembly.

What we really want — what I would like to see as a final outcome of this, the decisions from the citizens' assembly, is an actual ballot that's not first-past-the-post, because we want to change that, but a ballot that's chosen by the citizens' assembly that we all get to vote within the next territorial election.

Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pinard. I do have a question. One of the things we have heard multiple times in other areas is the need, if we change the system, to have a referendum. Do you have any thoughts — for example, if the citizens' assembly made a recommendation, does that need to go to a territory-

wide vote, or are you suggesting that the citizens' assembly makes the decision and the territory follows suit?

Mr. Pinard: I think the citizens' assembly can make a decision, however proportion they want to decide. I think, at the end of the day, it should be a ballot that we all get to vote with in the next election and test it to see if it works or not, if we're happy with it or not. I believe that's what New Zealand did with their system. They tried it for a couple of years — two elections, I believe — and then they decided if they liked it or not. I think that's a fair thing for everyone to be able to vote with and make a decision that way.

Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pinard.

Pardon me, JP; Mr. Cathers has a question.

Mr. Cathers: Actually, just a clarification, just for the room. In the New Zealand case, they had two referendums prior to instituting the system —

Mr. Pinard: Did they?

Mr. Cathers: — and then had a referendum afterward, which they had done when they instituted mixed member proportional. They had a review after — I believe you're correct in that two elections — but in New Zealand, they actually had two referendums where the citizens voted in favour of the change, two before they did it and then one in a review.

Mr. Pinard: That sounds good.

Chair: Thank you, Mr. Pinard.

Mr. Brekke: If I could just add — and the review came higher than the previous; am I correct there?

Mr. Cathers: That I don't know, actually, Dave. I don't know the numbers there.

Chair: I'm just going to stop our back-and-forth with the audience unless you're at the microphone.

Sally Wright, you're next up.

Ms. Wright: Thank you for coming back to Whitehorse. There are so many good reasons for us to go deeper into educating ourselves about this topic. Just the conversations we've just had over the last hour — Yukon citizens are very intelligent and they really care about what we have here, which is precious to all of us. I do note there are no indigenous leaders here today. I have watched closely, as you have gone on your summer tour of the communities. I have noted how few people have come to these heavily subsidized and financed hearings for you guys, who are our employees, to ask the same questions over and over again, when we all want to learn what you've learned. We don't want to sit on the computer and try and wade through your website to find out what you've learned from outside experts without even giving us the courtesy of having our own learning, as people.

I really appreciate what Bob Sharp talked about: going into the Legislature and feeling very ashamed at the state of our democracy. I do not feel that my views have ever been actually represented by anybody in my 40 years in the Yukon. I've just always voted for the wrong person. We need a citizens' assembly to take this heavy burden from your hands and to give it back to the people and to gain courage from the momentum of all these people who came here today asking you for a citizens' assembly so we can learn.

You guys are on a job that's four years long, and some people have been extending it for quite a long time, the job that you've had. I've tried for that job, and it was a learning experience. I don't envy you, but I really want to see some education here. It's just not fair that you guys get all educated about the sorry state of your democracy and your decision-making inabilities, because we're not represented. My voice isn't represented. We have climate change here. We need everybody around the table. There are many people who are not included in the decision-making that goes on in your halls. I call them "your halls" because I don't feel welcome there.

I want to see a citizens' assembly. There have been excellent Yukoners who have put forward ideas on how it would be structured, how it could look. You've met people who have done this successfully in other jurisdictions across the world, and I think we need to do this as quickly as possible and stop wasting our time.

Climate change is not something to be frittered away, because we're dragging our feet. Our children are waiting for our leadership, and I want you to show leadership and recommend a citizens' assembly. Thank you.

Chair: Thank you, Ms. Wright.

Sarah Newton, and I'm going to apologize if I slaughter your last names. The writing is not my writing. Sarah, it's your turn.

Ms. Newton: Thanks very much. We are living in really complex times right now. We're facing challenges that are completely unprecedented, with the housing shortage and the complex challenges and affordability, labour shortages across the territory that are putting pressures on our education system, on our health system. I will echo what others have said: that I do not envy you being in places of power right now and trying to face these types of challenges.

Climate change, for me, is the most important issue of our time, and it underscores everything else: housing, sustainability, affordability, access to food, poverty, all of these things are interconnected and they're interwoven.

We need a political system that can address the complexity of what we're facing right now. What I've seen in our political system is that it is really oppositional. One party gets into power, and we have an opposition party, and they're constantly arguing and trying to blame the other for what's happening in the world. Honestly, it's not anybody's fault; it's not one person's fault; it's not one party's fault and we need everybody's voice at the table when we're making decisions about how to deal with these really complex issues.

I see a citizens' assembly as a decision-making tool and a tool for building understanding and building consensus. From what I understand in building consensus, having circle-based discussions — that's really in line with indigenous ways of knowing. I know that we don't have very many here at this gathering, but I would like to encourage you to seek guidance from our First Nation leadership in how to make decisions in a way that builds consensus.

I don't feel that my vote has ever really mattered. I have had perspectives that I have not felt have been very adequately represented in the political system that we have, except when I

voted strategically, and I have had to make choices based not on how I feel that decisions should be made but based on the context, the greater context in our political system and understanding how that works, so that I could try to make it work for me a little bit better.

This has fuelled my activism, my advocacy work, my ability to go and do public engagement, and I have sought ways to become more engaged politically, but many of my peers have chosen to become less engaged. They have chosen to check out, people who are my age and people who are younger. This includes a lot of intelligent, very thoughtful people who may have different opinions from me, but are thoughts and opinions that I deeply respect, and they again feel like their vote does not matter and that they cannot impart change within our political system.

I agree that the voting age should be lowered, particularly because many of the important challenges that I talked about above are going to impact our youth disproportionately. Many of us who are my age and older have had the chance to benefit economically in a lot of different ways from the system the way it is, the status quo, but the youth are being disadvantaged in many important ways, especially in access to resources.

I really believe in the need for a citizens' assembly. I would like to thank you for accepting the submission that I made before where I really laid out in detail the climate change aspect of electoral reform, and I would just like to reiterate that 17 of the 18 countries that have managed to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions right now have proportional representation as their political system. I think if we have a citizens' assembly, people are going to look at the evidence and make decisions based on evidence. I strongly believe that — I'm a scientist by training, so evidence is something is deeply important to me. I believe that electoral reform is climate action. Thank you very much.

Chair: Thank you, Ms. Newton.

Don Roberts, you're next.

Mr. Roberts: First of all, I would like to thank the Committee for taking this on. It's not an easy topic; it's not an easy direction, but it definitely is one where we must go. In my 57 years here in the Yukon, as a son of a political neophyte, many times, actually trying it out and then trying to find solutions, it takes a team to do that, and the team is Yukon. I really would like to support the idea of a citizens' assembly. That, again, is education. I'm an educator, as many of you know. I believe education is where we need to go.

The provinces that have turned this around and have not looked at electoral reform, other than a vote, did not go down the path of educating the population. We know for a fact that many countries, as has been just mentioned by Sarah, have adopted changes. Our youth are demanding changes. I would like to think that my wife and family have had the best years I've ever had here in the Yukon. We want to keep that going, but we need a new challenge, and the challenge right now is climate change and how that affects all Yukoners. We don't need to carry on going down the same path.

Compromise is what it's all about. My whole life was trying to build compromise in my job, in my family, in my

community, and I think that's where we have to go. Politicians, by the very nature of their parties, tend to have their set ideas, and they tend to be the enemy that we want to bring down. We should not be doing this; we should be building together.

I really endorse the youth, lowering the vote, and I also really support the fact that we must move toward another model, and that's educating our population. Thank you very much for hearing us, and please, let's give it back to the citizens of the Yukon.

Chair: You were so short, Mr. Roberts. I just have a quick question, the same one I asked before, which is: With a citizens' assembly, do you see the recommendation coming from them as binding, or do you see it as a referendum issue?

Mr. Roberts: I think it's a combination. I think the citizens of the Yukon have to have the say in where they go, but they also need the education. Right now, a lot of people see — and as we've heard even tonight, some people don't want to change, because they like the fact that there's always going to be a top dog. Personally, I think those days are over. I don't know that they've ever been successful. We need to have a more comprehensive approach to trying to solve problems, and it's going to take the collective nature of the strength that we have in the Yukon. That's what we have: We have very thoughtful, very well-meaning people. We have a retirement group here who don't leave anymore; they stay, and they want to be included in this process of making sure we don't leave a mess for our next generations. That's why it's going to take a different approach in trying to do that, and that's where the citizens' assembly, I think, is one of the keys.

Chair: Thank you, Mr. Roberts.

Peter Coates?

Mr. Coates: Good evening. It has been said that every complex problem has a solution that is simple, easy to explain, and wrong. The solution to voting that we currently have is simple, easy to explain, and pretty random. The last two federal elections basically were crapshoots, depending on tactical voting and what happened in the minority parties. It clearly isn't particularly clever.

If we look at proportional representation, what is being represented proportionally? It's parties. So, let's take a look, for instance, at party lists. Who is going to be on the party lists? People selected by the parties? These are likely to be the most partisan people, exactly the sort of people you do not want, okay?

I'm not really in favour of proportional representation. It tends to strengthen parties. Parties are the enemy of good governance. Now, proportional representation, on the other hand, enables me to vote in various different ways. I can, for instance, vote the way I've almost always wanted to vote in an election: I want to vote against that person. I can put them at the bottom of the list. In first-past-the-post, I can't vote against someone; I have to pick someone to win; I can't pick someone to lose. Proportional representation enables me to express my vote in a more nuanced way.

Is preference voting complex? Well, where is first-past-the-post used, besides Canada? It's used in the UK, which is not exactly something to hold up as an example to anyone, the

US, possibly even worse. We are in bad company using first-past-the-post.

Preference voting gives me a nuanced way of voting, weakens parties rather than strengthening them. I see those as really convincing arguments. Anyways, there we go. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you, Peter. You talked about what doesn't work, but is there something you would recommend that you think does work?

Mr. Coates: Preference voting.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Preference voting.

Mr. Coates: Yes. Absolutely, because, as I say, it gives me the ability to express my vote in a fairly nuanced way. It weakens parties. If I was in your riding and I said, anyone but Streicker, I could say that in my vote.

Hon. Mr. Streicker: Thank you.

Mr. Coates: Thanks.

Chair: It's a hard act to follow.

Gerald Haase.

Mr. Haase: Good evening. I'm Gerald Haase from Marsh Lake. Thanks to the Special Committee on Electoral Reform for the many hours of work that you have done already to date and the hours that you will have coming up, I'm sure.

There have been many eloquent points made by speakers previously, and I'll —

Unidentified speaker: (inaudible)

Chair: Mr. Haase, just a second, please. Mr. Coates? Thank you. Mr. Brekke?

Mr. Haase, the floor is yours.

Mr. Haase: Thanks. I'll just add my perspective at this point for the record. I've been an advocate for electoral reform for many years. Back in my late 20s, I started looking at the Canadian democratic system. I thought that things were pretty good, but then I realized, hey, we're just patting ourselves on our backs here all the time. Can we do things better? Is there a way to do things better? Can we build a better car? Can we build a better electric vehicle? Can we build construction, houses better? Can we build our governments better? The answer in all cases, I would suggest, is yes.

I'm approaching this with a fair bit of scepticism, I guess, because of previous concerns I presented to the federal electoral reform committee, the ERRE, in Whitehorse, when they were here with Minister Montseith, and I approached that in good faith with a lot of hope to see those hopes dashed back in 2016.

I guess I want to add at this time that I think advocates for first-past-the-post don't mention, as I feel, that the system is really rigged for larger parties in a number of ways. I won't go into those ways; it's anecdotal here, I guess. Mainstream media is generally owned by donors of two major parties. Where does advertising come from? Editorials? Influences disproportional, I think, to the parties. I'm talking federally here.

I feel a little bit burned, I guess. Then, in the Yukon, I was part of the delegation by Fair Vote Yukon that presented the previous Yukon government with options that actually recommended a citizens' assembly. I presented some research on evidence for proportional representation, and I won't go into that in detail. Your Committee has that, I believe. In short, the

many countries that do have some form of proportional representation generally have a larger number of women and minorities in government. They are faster in reaching environmental goals and environmental legislation. As other people have mentioned, it seems that collaboration does really work.

I've been viewing these hearings since they started. Many presenters, if not most, have recommended a citizens' assembly, and I'll focus on that at this point. My concern is that the SCER right now is doing work that a citizens' assembly could and should be doing, that it would be viewed — if a citizens' assembly were to be doing this work, then it would be viewed by Yukoners as more legitimate.

For example, I know that in the Haines Junction hearing, there were several people, three people — it would be nice to reach a few more people. I think a citizens' assembly could achieve that. Engagement and education are really important. I think a citizens' assembly would follow your excellent work on this.

I'm also in favour of lowering the voting age. Studies have shown that people who vote at an early age will continue to vote, and we certainly want that engagement, not only engagement, but collaboration. Rather than an "us versus them" atmosphere in our Yukon Legislature, we could have considerably more collaboration. Thank you.

Chair: Thank you, Mr. Haase.

Eric Delong?

Mr. Delong: You can blame Sally Wright for bringing me here today. I'm here unprepared, so my comments will be candid.

I saw however long ago that the Yukon was going to try to implement, or at least study, some electoral reform, and I was like, Jesus Christ, how are we going to fuck this up, right? — like the rest of the jurisdictions that have tried this and failed. What I've seen in those other jurisdictions is they have been set up to fail at the start. You have a 60-percent pass rate in order to get this reform done. Well, how does that make any sense when your existing system doesn't even recognize that over 50 percent of the — like, the majority, isn't required to elect someone.

So, the disconnect there between how the referendum worked and how the existing first-past-the-post system worked — what on earth is going on?

When I think about the existing first-past-the-post system, in theory, you can have somebody who's elected with 34 percent of the vote; the next person has 33, then 32. And if I was to put that question to a group of five-year-olds, nobody in that class would think that is fair. I would assume that even five-year-olds could figure this out, and that's our current system? We can do better.

Now, you may know me as — well, my name is Eric. Currently, you may know me as the guy who's being sued by Mr. Streicker's ministry, and my experience of being sued by Mr. Streicker's ministry has really eroded my trust in governance. Even though Plato called democracy one of the worst forms of governance, next to tyranny, it's the best one we

have. I didn't read having a philosopher king as one of the options here in the electoral reform document.

So, with the options that we have left, I'm a strong advocate for a system that allows us to elect greater than 50 percent, a member with greater than 50 percent of the vote. Now, one of the speakers derided the American system, but we look to Alaska just recently, and they got their shit together, and they implemented alternate vote, I guess — ranked voting. I see that as something that is simple and effective and increases trust in governments.

Thank you. Any questions?

Chair: I have a question. You actually had — I think you had more than one recommendation. So, a citizens' assembly?

Mr. Delong: Citizens' — yes. That's fine. I think putting it to a broad referendum. The citizens' assembly is a representation of our citizens. If they're selected from a broad swath, then they would be reasonably representative and advocate for our best interest, for the rest of the public.

Chair: Sorry, I misspoke; you didn't actually say that, but what you did say is that you wanted the voting to change. You said that it had been set up to fail in other jurisdictions, for example, with more than 60 percent of the vote required, and so your suggestion was that it be similar to first-past-the-post, so anything over 50 percent — sorry; pardon me; I have just gotten — Peter, thank you — that the threshold needs to be lowered and that currently, in the first-past-the-post, the person with the most votes wins, but you made the comparison between other jurisdictions and the setting up to fail —

Mr. Delong: With their referendums, yes.

Chair: Sorry, can you elaborate on what you would like to see in a referendum? Thank you.

Mr. Delong: Sure. Can I elaborate what I would want to see in a referendum?

Chair: Yes, please.

Mr. Delong: Well, I wouldn't want to see one.

Chair: Perfect. Any other questions?

Thank you.

Marguerite?

Ms. Tölgyeci: Hello. Thanks for not trying my last name; it's understandable. My name is Marguerite Tölgyeci. I'm a president of the national francophone youth federation. I will be speaking as a Yukoner today, and I have been involved in the Yukon for more than a decade now.

To undermine the elector is to undermine democracy at its core. To undermine our young citizens is to do the same, in my opinion. Youth are leaders in many aspects of our society, for example, in mental health, inclusion, and the environment. To not involve them in our voting system is a mistake. Our education system is built to equip everyone here in this room to be a good citizen and to participate. At 16, you are already in grade 10, if not 11, which means you are near the end of that system, so you should be equipped by then to participate, to be a good citizen, and to vote. If you are not then equipped, we need more than one reform today.

Yukon youth are here. They love this territory, and they clearly want to be involved in the decision-making that goes on here. I'm a political science graduate, and one of my professors

once told us that basically you live in this house, and there are really big cracks in this house, and any construction worker or expert will be able to fix those really big cracks, but you, as the person living in the house, you know the smaller cracks. You know every little small crack. Basically, it means that our citizens know the small cracks in our system, and they want to be involved in fixing them. So please let us do that. That's it.

No questions?

Chair: I have a quick question. What is your overarching recommendation?

Ms. Tölgyeci: I say lower the voting age to 16, obviously. I think all of our youth in schools are equipped; even in the primary schools, they do mock voting, and every kid loves to do that, so I think we're way more than equipped at 16. I also would love to see more preferential — une système de vote préférentiale, as they say, just because I do feel that the first-past-the-post system is very competitive and very partisan, which turns off a lot of youth from getting involved with political stuff in general.

Chair: Merci.

Ms. Tölgyeci: Merci beaucoup.

Chair: Right now, we're going to switch. We have two people on Zoom who would like to present. So, first up, we have Dario Paola.

Mr. Paola: Perfect. Thank you, everybody. Thank you, Kate; thank you, Committee.

I really just wanted to reiterate and mention some points that have been brought up before. I think Peter's particular points about the strengthening of the parties is one of particular import. All that being said, considering the Yukon's population and highly diverse nature, one thing I would like to make a recommendation to the Committee on, as we move forward on these things, is being mindful that we've made comparisons to New Zealand and other places, but these are populations that have far larger populations than that of the territory, and I would hate to see our system become over-burdened with MLAs and overrepresentation and lumping together of ridings and not actually getting an appropriate balance between actually having good representation and all of that in the House.

That being said, I also want to bring a recommendation of the youth vote: Absolutely, it matters, and 16 I can't agree more with. They are perfectly competent and ready to participate. I think that ties in nicely with the concept that we're all becoming more familiar with, the seven generations principle, and that would be trying to prepare ourselves and preparing our future for seven generations from now, as the decisions we make today have impacts on what happens seven generations from now.

That being said, that was sort of my recommendations, and the last piece — I wanted to sort of caution that any change management that there is, that whether it be a referendum or a citizens' assembly, Elections Yukon is going to have to be heavily consulted and involved on writing education materials for Yukoners so that people are well-informed and aware of what's going on, because without the involvement of those individuals in Elections Yukon, they're going to be an important component in educating our citizens. Thank you.

Chair: Thank you very much.

Next up on Zoom, we have Francis van Kessel.

Ms. van Kessel: Hi there. My name is Francis van Kessel. I just wanted to thank the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation for letting us have these very serious meetings on their land. A long time ago when things were happening on people's lands, they would let them know and make sure that there was — because these are serious conversations that we're having. I just wanted to point that out to everyone first.

I'm going to keep it short here. Voting age should be 16, even lower, maybe 14, because we really need to start involving our young people. I grew up in a household where my parents taught me about voting from a very young age. I grew up, actually, in a conservative household, believe it or not, and I never learned any of this in school, or if it was in school, I didn't pay attention, because it was talking about the federal instead of the territorial, and as we know, those are two different systems completely.

I do also recommend a citizens' assembly. Sorry, my dog is playing with a toy. I recommend a citizens' assembly just because it resonates mostly with myself as well.

I also believe that there shouldn't be parties. As you may know, I have been a candidate for two terms in two different elections and was unsuccessful, but I ran for a party that I thought represented the most of me, and I still am pretty — represent with that party, but there are certain things that I don't agree with, and I'm sure that many other candidates have run into the situation where they resonate closely with a party, so they sign under their name, because a lot of people don't have the financial means to run as an independent in an election. It's expensive, and I thank very much my party for covering that, and to be honest, that's the reason why I ran in those.

Another thing is — and I know it's not one of the suggestions — give me that; sorry; my dog — is we haven't looked at any — if we looked at Nunavut's system on the consensus government, that follows a very traditional Inuk people, and I really think that we should really rely on some of our First Nation people here in the Yukon. We have many incredible First Nations, and they've been living on this land for thousands of years and governing themselves for thousands of years. I think that we could take a page from their books.

Anyways, that's all I have to say. Thank you.

Chair: Bonnie Duffee.

Ms. Duffee: Good evening. I listened to the Fair Vote presentation last spring, and most of my comments kind of came from that or were sparked by it. Though Fair Vote Yukon was considered non-partisan, they were quick to blame the feds for not producing electoral reform.

Like some of the other speakers, the process for change will only come with collaboration and mutual effort to work together. I believe the many successes the Yukon has achieved are attributable to joint work and that this Committee has the make-up to achieve it.

Change of fundamental governance affects everyone, and it can be hard to keep the herd together. Trying to get the best deal for our special interests can sidetrack us. We need

someone to push us to change, but they are not necessarily the ones to lead us all the way through that change.

So, quick solutions, like referenda, are fraught with misdirection. It satisfies our need for change, but it doesn't do the deep dive. Our land claim is a good example of how many times we had to go back to the table to get it right and to keep adjusting to new thoughts. It's the same with the citizens' assembly idea. It sounds idyllic to pluck a few citizens from the community and have them do the work for us. Again, it is a quick fix to satisfy a complex issue.

I compare a citizens' assembly to forming a jury in a court of law. When a jury is gathered, it is

under the direction of a sitting judge, a scholar duly informed by constitutional law with current authority to make judgments. Kate, I have this all on the e-mail; you don't have to write. The jury has the restraints of the laws of Canada, and it's overseen by the judge, and they cannot make decisions with impunity. So, where would our citizens' assembly get their direction?

We are a small jurisdiction and should choose something that suits us specifically. The dual member system coming from northern Alberta is interesting. In the past, we have been similar to northern Alberta, for example, in our health determinants. Population density, remoteness, single roads to communities, distance to health centres, age distribution, education levels, et cetera — all requiring delivery of service different from urban or dense regions.

To meet our voting needs, we have to deliver and measure in different ways. Understanding our uniqueness might move us to a voting system that is uniquely tailored to Yukon. Then we can address situations like having only two candidates or small ridings like Old Crow.

I get the sense that we generally do not know how each of the systems works. Did you see the article in the local paper about a community in Alaska holding a drag queen contest to practise voting systems? What if our youth groups and bingo-goers had a chance to experiment with a few of the systems? I'm pretty sure we would have more informed voters. I think we should be out there test-driving electoral reform systems everywhere we can.

Chair: Thank you for that presentation. So, with that — come on back; you had some thoughts. Do you have one direction or one recommendation you would lean toward right now?

Ms. Duffee: Yes, anything where you choose something and people get behind one idea and try and make other people understand it and choose it is a wrong way for us to do it. That's one. Any other questions?

Chair: That's it; thank you.

Mervyn Williams?

Mr. Williams: Ho, ho. We always say this in our Tlingit culture when we speak.

I would like to see the voting age down — at least 14. I would like to see my native people vote and have a say in this government system. When I was a young boy, my mom was running for the mayor of Whitehorse, and she stepped down. She was winning, but she said, I have to step down because

there's a little string tied to my mouth, and it goes back into that back room, and you don't know who's pulling it. I would like to see it done right. My grandma always said, make sure you do things right. I always like to do things right.

I am a sober Indian, Tlingit. I don't drink; I don't smoke; I don't smoke marijuana. I am — I work lots, but nobody hires me because I'm native. They don't know what I can do, but my boss loves me.

I would like to see the voting age come down, especially us aboriginal people. This is our country. Everybody's welcome. Grandma told me that long time ago. Everybody's welcome. There's enough to go around. Nothing changes, just the faces. Everybody's still beating each other up for nothing. We have to learn how to get along.

Everybody must. We're children of this planet. We must not be greedy and take everything. There's enough to go around. There's a three-headed monster we all have to fight now. The first head is greed, but somebody has taken it all. The second head is jealousy. Don't be jealous of anybody. The Creator gave you something; find it and mobilize it. The third head is envy. Be happy who you are. Don't be envying anybody.

I would like to see the voting age come down, especially for our aboriginal people. We went through a lot, and everybody in this room knows now. Let's grab them and cherish them. We don't need this: Go back to the reserve where you belong. We have lots to give. Let's share it. We're children of this planet, but we're beating each other up for nothing, for nothing. Two wrongs don't make it right. We're still here, right here.

Please let us share it. Günilshish. [Tlingit First Nation language spoken. Text unavailable.]

Chair: Thank you, Mr. Williams.

So, we are 10 minutes from the end. Does anyone on the floor wish to speak?

Just one second; I'll second call for anyone who hasn't spoken yet.

Would anyone wish to speak?

All right, Ms. Greetham, three minutes.

Ms. Greetham: I don't need three minutes. I just want to thank everyone for being here.

Chair: Into the microphone, please.

Ms. Greetham: It overwhelms me to see people come and speak. This gentleman, thank you for being here. We can do better, so I hope everyone — could we have a show of hands in the room for a citizens' assembly?

Chair: It's hard to count with two hands up there. I'm just going to put that out there.

Mr. Sokolov, two minutes.

Mr. Sokolov: Thank you. First, I want to support what the very first speaker said about lowering the voting age.

The second thing, in my professional life, I have been observing and reporting on innovation and IT for over 20 years, and I don't know; today it wasn't the topic here of electronic voting or e-voting. I don't know if it has been a topic in your previous hearings that you've had across the territory. If it has, I suppose you have met with IT experts who have told you

about IT security issues, and where we stand today, “IT security” is a contradiction in terms. We have to assume that every IT system is broken, has been hacked already.

There are two types of IT systems: those that are hacked and those that we don’t know yet that they’ve been hacked. That is a sad truth, but that’s not my main point. If we were able to solve it, if we somehow, in the Yukon, were the first ones to design a secure computer that makes people vote, I think we are still beside the problem.

In our society, important events always have a ceremonial aspect to them. We swear oaths; we exchange rings; we pour water over little babies — we do things in public and in a ceremonial aspect. Why? To underscore the importance of it, to say hey, look, something is happening. If we have people voting at home through their computer, it becomes like liking something on Facebook; I think we totally lose that importance. We lose the political act of voting.

Today voting is you get up, you get dressed, you go in public, you say, I’m here to vote. That’s a public act; it’s a community act; it’s a community celebration when we vote of our freedoms, of our political freedoms. If we just do it while we’re on the loo, just before ordering some food delivery, we totally lose that, and we lose the next generation of voters.

So, something I see — and it’s beautiful, as an elections officer — it’s beautiful, so many people bringing their children to vote. They learn about it; they see how it works. Again, if it’s just e-voting, that doesn’t happen, and the whole aspect of — the ceremonial aspect of the importance of it is lost. Thank you.

Chair: On that note, Mr. Sharp, I’m sorry; we’re out of time.

On that note, I do appreciate that you joined us today. Some people have appreciated the ceremony of public hearings, and some people have not, but we value your being here, your attendance, and the amount of information that has been sent in.

Before I adjourn this hearing, I would 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. I would also like to thank the Yukoners who are listening and watching this hearing live and in the future.

The Committee will be hearing from Yukoners at more community hearings next week in both Mayo and Carmacks. 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

This hearing is now adjourned.

The Committee adjourned at 7:53 p.m.