



Yukon Legislative Assembly

Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6



April 5, 2019

Hon. Sandy Silver
Premier
Box 2703
Whitehorse, YT Y1A 2C6

Dear Premier Silver,

Re: Electoral Reform

I am writing in response to our meeting yesterday about your government's plans for electoral reform. I would like to note that we have concerns about the approach you've outlined to us. Those concerns include, but are not limited to, the following:

Concerns with the Committee

As you indicated in our meeting, the "non-partisan" committee you are creating will be made up of individuals selected and appointed only by the Liberal government. This is a major concern and undermines the neutrality and non-partisan nature of their work. This committee will be making recommendations that could fundamentally change our democracy, and by allowing only one party to select members you will be creating, at the very least, a perception of bias in the work of the committee.

I would also like to remind you that on November 22, 2017 the Legislative Assembly debated and unanimously passed Motion No. 19 which committed your government to selecting this committee in cooperation with the other elected political parties. The wording of that motion was:

THAT this House urges the Government of Yukon to fulfill its election commitment by appointing, in cooperation with all political parties in the Yukon Legislative Assembly, a non-partisan commission on electoral reform to engage and collaborate with Yukoners, consider fixed elections dates and consider other changes to Yukon's electoral system.

The section of that motion that reads, "in cooperation with all political parties in the Yukon Legislative Assembly" was an amendment that I had brought forward and its purpose was to ensure that the committee was not made up of appointees selected only by the Liberal government.

When I brought forward this amendment your comments were very brief and succinct. I have included the exchange below for your reference;

Mr. Hassard: I certainly won't take 20 minutes. I believe that this strengthens the amendment because it gives the government the opportunity — whether it be through the Members' Services Board or the all-party committee on appointments to boards and committees, or however it is chosen — to work through the details on who is appointed to this non-partisan commission, and I believe that it would give them the opportunity to work on such things as the terms of reference or timelines, which I know was obviously a concern of some. With that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing other thoughts and comments on this subamendment.

Ms. Hanson: I will constrain my comments at this point to the subamendment. I have no distinct problems with the notion of there being cooperation among the parties in terms of determining the process for appointing this non-partisan commission on electoral reform. We can support this subamendment

Speaker: Is there any further debate on the subamendment?

Hon. Mr. Silver: It sounds good to me.

Speaker: Are you prepared for the question on the subamendment?

Subamendment to Motion No. 19 agreed to

Further I would like to point you to the collaborative all-party process that was recently conducted by the federal government. As you may be aware, that process included the creation of an All-Party Special Committee on Electoral Reform that had representation from each party in the House of Commons.

Finally, the process in place in Yukon to study and recommend changes to our electoral districts is designed in a way to give each political party equal representation in order to prevent any perception of stacking the deck in favour of one particular party.

I strongly urge you to allow for an all-party process in order to uphold the integrity and confidence in this process.

Concerns with the Terms of Reference

As you indicated in our meeting, opposition parties will not be allowed to participate in the development of the Terms of Reference for this committee and, despite a request to see them, you were unable to share them with the opposition parties. This, coupled with the fact that the committee will be made up of individuals selected by only the Liberal Party leaves us with the distinct impression that you are stacking the deck.

I strongly urge you to allow for the involvement of all parties in the development of the terms of reference for this committee.

Lack of Committal to a Referendum

In our meeting it was indicated to you that our belief is that changing the way Yukoners vote should not be taken lightly, and any proposed change to our electoral system should be put to a referendum. Changing the way we cast a ballot is a major change to our democracy and could alter the weight and the meaning of how each of our votes translate into how we are governed.

Simply put, when you change the rules of democracy, everyone should get a say.

I urge you to commit to this principle and to a referendum before changing the way we vote.

Thank you for your attention in this matter,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Stacey Hassard', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Stacey Hassard
Leader of the Official Opposition