



Statement by the Members of the Assembly

September 12, 2024

WHO WE ARE

We are a diverse group of 38 committed Yukon citizen volunteers, representative of the Yukon's 19 electoral districts.

We are diverse in all ways: age, class, career, culture, background, gender and from urban and rural areas across the territory. Some of us were born and raised in the Yukon; others moved here recently.

We expressed our interest in participating through a survey open to all Yukoners, were randomly selected, and then committed to serve over the summer. We were open minded—we did not have a predisposition for change. We were open to new ideas and to listening to other people. We noticed how different we are, but we were able to work together in a positive way. We were a highly engaged group and felt comfortable asking questions and getting clarification.

We sincerely represented Yukoners throughout this process.

HOW WE WORKED

Over several weekends of deliberation, everybody really, truly engaged in this process. We have a very high degree of confidence and faith in both the process and our recommendation.

We came together with a diversity of opinions, beliefs and ideas. One of the first things that we did was develop a set of ground rules. Then, we explored our values for working together and identified six key shared values that we would use to help select an electoral system. Next, we engaged in an intensive process of learning about different electoral systems. This was supported by Dr. Jonathan Rose (an expert on this), several other speakers from the Yukon and Outside, and our excellent facilitators.

We then engaged in a lengthy deliberation on the various systems and how they could work in the Yukon and benefit the territory. With further deliberation, we finally came to a consensus on one system.

WHAT WE LEARNED

We learned about citizens' assemblies first and how they function. Our members came together with different levels of knowledge about electoral systems. We engaged in an incredible amount of learning in a short time. We deliberated intensively; we listened deeply to each other; and we each changed our minds several times. We thoughtfully built consensus. All members were engaged and care strongly about democracy and how different electoral systems work. Members felt safe speaking their minds and disagreed at times.

Electoral systems reflect the values of our community. Voters affect how the electoral system behaves and the system itself affects how voters behave. Some systems are not as feasible in the Yukon, due to our unique geography and population distribution.

Electoral systems have three components: ballot structure, electoral formula, and district magnitude. Ballot structure is how the ballot is laid out and filled in. Electoral formula involves the rules by which a candidate wins. District magnitude is the number of candidates elected in each riding.

There is no single perfect system and every system involves trade-offs. For example, there's a trade-off between having a local representative for your riding and having each party's number of seats in the legislature reflect the number of votes they received.

All our deliberations occurred in the awareness of the Yukon context. We recognize that we live in a unique place with 14 communities around a rapidly growing urban center. We have great respect for balancing the needs of rural and urban voters and Indigenous and non-Indigenous voters.

We learned that, despite a wide diversity of views, we found broad agreement on our final recommendation and on our values as Yukoners.

OUR VALUES

Assembly members identified the values that were important for the Yukon electoral system. After much discussion, members refined the list, through consensus, to six core values; these values guided our deliberations and our decision making.

The values we established were: legitimacy, fairness, local representation and accountability, transparency, simplicity and accessibility, and participation.

And as our discussions advanced, the members recognized the differences between urban and rural areas, due to the vastness of the Yukon, and that each community has their own unique needs.

OUR RECOMMENDATION

We recommend Ranked Vote as a system of preferential voting where each voter ranks some or all the candidates standing for election in their riding.

Every voter will indicate their preferred candidate and may optionally rank all candidates from first, or most preferred, to last, or least preferred. A single X would count as an expression of a voters' first choice.

To win, the successful candidate must receive a majority, consisting of 50 percent plus one of votes cast in their riding.

If no candidate receives 50 percent plus one, the candidate with the least amount of first preference votes will be eliminated. The next preference of the voters who marked the eliminated candidate as their first choice will then be distributed to the remaining candidates.

This process continues until one candidate receives at least 50 percent plus one of the votes cast. As a result, successful candidates will have demonstrated support from the majority of voters in their riding.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Randomize the order of candidate names on ballots to reduce the potential advantage of names being in the same order for every ballot.
- That Elections Yukon undertake an extensive education program to help fully inform all potential voters about the choice they are making in a public vote.
- That the threshold to win a public vote be the same as the proposed Ranked Vote system, 50 percent plus one vote.

OUR RATIONALE

Ranked Vote ensures that more votes are captured in the outcome of an election. The winning candidate in each riding must receive a majority of the votes cast, 50 percent plus one, requiring them to have broader support across their riding. This can lead to greater voter participation and an outcome that can be seen as more legitimate in the eyes of voters.

Local representation and accountability are extremely important to Yukoners and Ranked Vote maintains this value. Voters continue to have a clear, direct, local connection to representatives who are accountable to their constituents. It's something that we value in the current system.

In the current system, voters may feel compelled to vote strategically for a candidate they think has the best chance of winning, rather than their preferred candidate. With Ranked Vote, voters can honestly rank their choices without feeling their vote is wasted. If their top choice is eliminated, their vote transfers to their next choice ensuring their preferences still influence the outcome.

Randomizing the order of candidates on ballots prevents any one candidate from getting an unfair advantage because of their position on the list. This way every candidate has an equal chance, and the result better reflects the voters' true preference.

Allowing voters the choice whether to rank all candidates, or only some candidates, and to allow the use of an X to count as indication of a voter's only choice, prioritizes voter expression and reduces the potential of spoiled ballots in voting under the new Ranked Vote system.

The Yukon Citizen's Assembly on Electoral Reform

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform was established by the Yukon Legislative Assembly following public hearings and expert testimony to the Special Committee on Electoral Reform from 2021 to 2023. In 2023, 63% of survey respondents supported the creation of a Citizens' Assembly to explore different voting systems.

The 38 assembly members represent the Yukon's 19 current electoral districts. The Yukon Bureau of Statistics selected members from a survey conducted in 2023 where 1,793 respondents declared their willingness to participate in a such an endeavour balancing as much as possible for age and gender.

Members came together across four, two-day sessions from May to September to examine different electoral system options and deliberate how each might work in the territory.

Presenters in the learning phase included several political scientists, an elections officer, a former Yukon premier, current MLAs, an election systems advocate and a youth advocate.

Between May 25 and August 12, the Assembly received 44 public submissions. Submissions received, all learning sessions, and more information on the citizens' assembly process can be found at yukoncitizensassembly.ca.

A Citizens' Assembly is a broadly representative cross-section of the public who are given time, resources and a broad range of viewpoints to learn deeply about an issue and provide a recommendation.

Assembly members are not direct representatives like MLAs and MPs. They are private citizens participating in an act of public service, much like those selected for jury duty.

Since 2007, more than 1,900 Canadians have volunteered 71,000 hours (about eight years) to support more than 50 different Reference Panels and Citizens' Assemblies. One in 32 Canadian households has received an invitation to serve in one of these long-form deliberative processes.

The Yukon Citizens' Assembly is the first-ever held in the territory, and the third established in Canada to examine electoral reform, following British Columbia in 2004 and Ontario in 2006.

QUICK FACTS

- Ranked Vote, as recommended by the Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, is also known elsewhere by the names Alternative Vote, Instant Run-Off Voting, and Ranked Choice.
- Ranked Vote is a majority electoral system. Winning candidates must achieve a majority of all votes cast in their riding.
- The Yukon's current electoral system, First Past the Post, is a plurality system. Winning candidates must achieve more votes than other candidates in their riding, but not necessarily a majority of all votes cast.
- Ranked ballots are used in Australia, Ireland, 62 jurisdictions in the United States including Maine, Alaska, New York City, Minneapolis and San Francisco.
 - Canadian political parties often use a ranked ballot system in leadership elections.
- The full report of the Yukon Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform containing all details of the process leading to their recommendation will be publicly available and tabled in the Yukon Legislature by October 31.
- The Yukon Legislature is responsible for determining next steps, including whether a public vote will take place, and when, so Yukoners can decide whether to adopt the Ranked Vote system or retain the current voting system.

REVISION: An earlier version of this page included a statement "Since 2016, Ontario Municipalities have the power to implement ranked ballots for elections. To date London and Toronto have done so." Revisions to the Ontario Municipal Act later reversed this, so this sentence has been removed.