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## Special Committee on Electoral Reform

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**Monday, September 26, 2016**



**Chair**

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia**



## Special Committee on Electoral Reform

Monday, September 26, 2016

• (1340)

[English]

**The Chair (Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.)):**  
Good afternoon.

On behalf of all the members of the committee and the staff, I'd like to say how wonderful it is to be in Whitehorse. People have been so friendly and warm, and it's such a lovely setting. It's a great opportunity for us to learn more about how people in the territory feel and what they think about electoral reform.

It's our thirtieth meeting. We held hearings in Ottawa during the summer and now we are travelling for three weeks. This is the first day of hearings in our second week of travel. Tomorrow we're off to Victoria.

I'll give you an overview of how we've been proceeding. Each witness will be afforded 10 minutes to present. We're a bit tight for time in this panel, so if you can do eight or nine minutes, you certainly get brownie points from the chair, let's put it that way. But you do have a full 10 minutes. At 10 minutes we have to stop the presentation, but it doesn't mean you won't have an opportunity to express your viewpoint during the question and answer period.

After the presentations we have a question and answer period where each member of the committee is allotted five minutes to engage with the witnesses. The five minutes include answers. Sometimes only 30 seconds are left for an MP in that five-minute segment.

I would suggest to the members that if you're at that stage, you might want to use the remaining 30 seconds for a statement or a very rapid-fire question, because before you know it we'll be over the five-minute mark.

To the witnesses, if we are at the five-minute mark and there's no time to answer, please don't worry. You'll have an opportunity the next time you have the mike to answer the previous question, if you wish. We're pretty flexible that way, but we do have to keep to some strict rules about time limits.

We have three witnesses with us this afternoon. Appearing as individuals we have Mr. Kirk Cameron and Mr. Peter Becker. Then appearing on behalf of the Green Party of Canada, Yukon section, we have Mr. Gerald Haase.

We'll start with Mr. Cameron for 10 minutes, please.

**Mr. Kirk Cameron (As an Individual):** Thank you, committee chair and members. Welcome to Yukon. It is indeed a pleasure to appear before you on this important national matter.

Ten minutes is short, so I'll jump right into it. I will not spend time on the various models that you are considering; you have had and will have many informed experts speaking about these. My general thought, however, is that a different model that more exactly aligns popular vote with representation in the House of Commons is laudable, and should be what guides you as you wade through the plethora of options that will be before you.

What I wish to speak to this afternoon relates largely to three of the principles you have been asked to explore in your mandate statement, specifically, principle two on engagement, principle three on accessibility, and principle five on local representation. I am coming at these three areas with a northern bias that I hope you will consider as you address the broad interests and issues of this large and complex nation of ours.

Relating to principle two on engagement, I will highlight that, among other things, you are to encourage participation, enhance social cohesion, and offer opportunities for inclusion of under-represented groups in the political process. With respect to this principle, I would suggest you consider the following.

In our Canada of today, we have set as a very high priority working to find a path of reconciliation with the first peoples of this country—first nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples. One avenue that is open to you to contribute to this reconciliation is to consider some form of guaranteed representation in the House of Commons for aboriginal peoples. I do not know if New Zealand's chief electoral officer spoke to this unique aspect of the New Zealand parliamentary system, but they have had guaranteed seats for the Maori dating back, interestingly enough, to 1867. Today there are seven Maori seats in its House of Representatives, which is determined through a mixed member proportional system. There are two rolls, one for Maori voting. Maori can choose whether they wish to vote on a general or on a specific Maori roll.

I'm not suggesting this particular model. It's only to say that this is an example of where a parliamentary system has embraced a unique approach so that a first people—in the New Zealand case, the Maori—can, quote, see themselves represented directly in the system.

I am reminded of Jean-Pierre Kingsley's presentation to you. The fifth point that he asked you to consider is that the “Canadian reality must be reflected in the system of representation.” As well, “Canadians must be able to see themselves in their representatives and in the system by which they choose them.”

I believe there is no better way to achieve this than by your committee actively engaging with aboriginal representative groups such as the Assembly of First Nations, and Inuit and Métis organizations, among others, to determine if there is an avenue forward that would achieve this principle for the aboriginal peoples of our country. I do not know if you have hearings set with these groups, but if not, I would suggest that you reach out to them.

I note there is aboriginal interest in reform at the parliamentary level that would build linkages between our aboriginal citizenry and Parliament. You may be aware that in 1996 the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommended that a house of first peoples be established as a third chamber of Parliament. The details on its role and responsibilities are set out in the commission's report. In brief, it is recommending a chamber with legislative responsibility over bills that have substantive impact over Canada's aboriginal peoples.

In addition, in its 1996 *Four-Ten Declaration of Dedication and Commitment*, the Land Claims Agreements Coalition, a body representing all aboriginal groups with modern land claims agreements in Canada, called for the creation of an independent implementation and review body, perhaps similar to the Office of the Auditor General, reporting directly to Parliament on progress of land claims implementation matters that relate to today's modern treaties.

This proposal is not about the electoral process, per se, but I use this example, along with the RCAP proposal, to underscore that the aboriginal first peoples see Parliament as a fundamentally important institution relating to their relationship in Canada. In short, I would suggest you consider how electoral reform might assist in our reconciliation journey in Canada.

Principle three on accessibility and inclusiveness calls for change that would support access by all eligible voters. This takes one immediately to the consideration of online voting. Indeed, in the first paragraph of the committee's mandate, online voting is expressly noted as a matter for the committee to consider. I wish to bring to the committee's attention that there are many communities throughout the north that do not have reliable communications infrastructure that would reliably support this voting option.

● (1345)

Indeed, even in Yukon if a backhoe in northern British Columbia takes out our one fibre optic cable, the entire territory goes dark. A second line is being worked on, but I use this reality that Yukoners face to raise the point that rural and remote areas of Canada do not have the same level of access to or reliance in this mode of connectivity. Online voting may help many areas of Canada, but do not assume that it is a good option for all regions and communities.

I'll turn now to principle five on local representation. It recognizes the value that Canadians attach to community, to members of Parliament understanding local conditions and advancing local needs at the national level, and to having access to members of Parliament to facilitate resolution of their concerns and participation in the democratic process.

Here I would like to provide a brief history on Yukon's democratic journey. It has not been straightforward. Some of this history I am going to recount to you is not about Yukon's relationship with Parliament, but it is a governance backdrop to consider when

reflecting on the interests of a subnational jurisdiction in Canada, that being Yukon.

Our democratic journey has been inconsistent, to say the least. In the late 1890s, the population of the territory jumped to over 40,000 due to gold seekers in the Klondike. Between 1898 and 1908, Yukon's legislature, at that time referred to as the Yukon Council, grew to a body of eight representatives. This was a wholly elected assembly, in keeping with the evolutionary track most provinces followed throughout their histories. Due to a massive drop in population combined with extreme fiscal pressures on Canada during World War I, this, quote, normal evolution of representative government in the Yukon took a nasty turn.

In 1918 Yukon's Constitution, otherwise known as the Yukon Act, federal legislation, was amended to give authority to the Governor in Council to abolish the elected council and turn legislating authority to an appointed body. Although this did not happen, given considerable pressure from Yukoners, the Yukon Council was reduced in number from ten to three. This rump stayed in place until 1951, when the number of council members increased to five, and today we find ourselves with nineteen.

In the intervening years there was another event that threatened the very existence of Yukon as a distinct subnational entity in Canada. In 1937 a deal was announced between British Columbia's Premier Duff Pattullo and Canada for the annexation of Yukon to British Columbia. Only thanks to a particularly thorny political issue around Catholic schools did this deal not go through. We were very close to becoming just another northern region in the province of British Columbia.

This is important to note because Yukon's political rights journey has been turbulent, to say the least. We do not want this current process on electoral reform to take away any of the advancements that we've fought for over these many years. I recommend, in light of this uncertain evolution of political development in Yukon, that you be very careful in determining how a form of proportional representation, if that is indeed what you hone in on, will impact not just Yukon but the three northern territories.

Without a doubt our identities are distinct. In 1995 I co-authored a book with Professor Graham White, from the University of Toronto, called *Northern Governments in Transition*. A conclusion we reached was that:

...the Yukon, the Western NWT and the Nunavut region differ markedly from one another. At the same time, complex cultural and lifestyle differences are found within each region.

Just as you might risk life and limb if you were to suggest that there are few differences between Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, or between Alberta and British Columbia, you may wish to be careful suggesting that the three territories are of similar social, ethnic, economic, or political character. Indeed they are not.

As a consequence, I would caution that whatever model or models you wish to propose, you should not suggest a commonality across the northern region. I suspect you would not think of proportional districts that would overlay a number of provinces. Similarly, do not consider “north” as a homogeneous political state that can be addressed as a single political entity. Doing so would be a profound mistake and completely contrary to the local principle that you are asked to uphold in your deliberations over your model of choice.

We recognize that each territory is privileged in that each has one representative in the House of Commons despite our relatively small populations. However, this is about regional character and distinction. This recognition of the Canadian identity, a collection of its many regions, should not be lost in an effort to find the right proportional mix.

There is a final point I would like to make, and this has nothing to do with the unique fabric or character of the north. I believe that the former Clerk of the Privy Council, whom I briefly had the privilege of working with while I was Yukon’s cabinet secretary, expressed to you a view that I too hold. The selection of candidates in a proportional system should align with the interest in voter preference. In other words, as Mr. Himelfarb suggested to you, it should be “voters rather than parties [that] determine order of candidates”.

● (1350)

Although parties are incredibly important to provide choice to Canadians on public policy options, I agree with the former clerk that we should not hand to parties the ability to choose who we would like in our House to represent us on matters of national importance. That is our job as the electorate in Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Cameron. That was very useful testimony, especially regarding the distinction between the territories. I think it’s important to keep that in mind, and it bears mentioning. Thank you.

I would like to welcome Larry Bagnell, your local member of Parliament. We’re very pleased to have him with the committee today. He’s not a permanent member of the committee, but he’s here today to listen to what the people of the Yukon have to say about electoral reform.

I’d also like to acknowledge Mr. Pat Kelly, who is not a regular member of the committee but is substituting today.

Thank you both for being here.

We’ll go now to Mr. Becker for 10 minutes, please.

**Mr. Peter Becker (As an Individual):** Thank you, committee members.

Thank you to everybody who is here. Thank you to the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta’an Kwäch’än Council, on whose territory we are meeting. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

In my opening statement, I would like to add context to a discussion that perhaps too often is overly technical. Therefore, I’ll start off with only one particular observation of detail. The following six words are the first point I’d like to make that concern the public

communication of this project. We should try to build consensus in our country by building on the familiarity with the current system. These six words are “first past the post will stay” as part of electoral reform, with possible components such as proportional representation and preferential ballots.

This should be the headline—those six words. Coming consciously from the foundations of Canadian democracy, it is what I believe will decide the outcome of this courageous project also by making it survive, hopefully past another election.

In Canada and beyond, there’s a dangerous malaise of disenchantment and cynicism with political representation and political leadership. Electoral reform can become a constructive element of wider democratic restoration. Part of the Prime Minister’s good fortune during the election was that he touched on the aspect of technocratic authoritarianism with regard to his father, and Michael Pitfield’s Privy Council procedures.

Since those days of Trudeau senior, a shift from a marketplace of ideas toward a dictatorship of ideas has gone much further. Many people don’t look at the corrupt and protectionist details of so-called globalized free trade, which is not about trade, and simply blame these democratic crippling flaws on politicians as a quasi-evil species.

Serving the brevity of the occasion, if it were possible to reduce this problem of cynicism, which is relevant to electoral reform, to one source mechanism, we might have to call it out as investor-state dispute settlement that serves up protectionism for big pharma and big oil cartels, etc.

With a triple punch, ISDS allows multinational monopolies to de facto legislate and cripple the reputation and integrity of parliaments, as well as ruining the honour of the crown. One, break the law. Two, raid the Treasury with arbitration panel penalties. Three, make off with or destroy livelihoods and poison land.

Recently, the Prime Minister, certainly as far as North American government positions are concerned, presented us with another novelty by stating that ISDS might have to be removed from CETA, the comprehensive trade agreement, and the European trade agreement, as it has become an absolute no-go with all remaining European Union member governments.

● (1355)

**The Chair:** Mr. Becker, will you be addressing the pros and cons of first past the post?

**Mr. Peter Becker:** Well, that’s coming along.

Following through on removing anti-democratic ISDS provisions from agreements could evolve into a mark of wisdom for the Canadian government, as it would clarify that electoral reform is not meant to be a fig leaf for democratic health.

I might add that I certainly hope that our member of Parliament, Mr. Bagnell, will take up the Prime Minister’s inspiration. He could have beat him to the punch anyway, since he was well informed over the years on what ISDS is all about.

We need to reverse a dictatorship of ideas back to a marketplace of ideas that can be identified. In the current fashion of political elites who ignore the language, any language, of our country, and who instead favour artificial, deceptive language solutions such as globalization, which in reality is not internationalism but merely European provincialism of Chicago economics, it will continue to backfire. ISDS may attack again and attempt to penalize, with extortion, electoral reform legislation itself.

Carbon pricing is the enabling twin of social licence to do harm to economic and ecological survival by pushing back renewable, sustainable economies with oil and gas subsidies. One result is that protectionism and trade restrictions against renewable investments may continue, such as the 2011 NAFTA chapter 11 attack on domestic procurement in Ontario energy development. Racialized finance colonialism against the G77 countries, who pursue renewable leap-frogging and oppose the shackling to oil imports by carbon pricing in conjunction with other structural adjustment penalties in the Paris agreement, could have been avoided.

Canada is the country of Lester Pearson's imaginative diplomacy, of Harold Innis, and of Marshall McLuhan, who inspired high-tech as well as language awareness. Canada can provide substantive climate leadership as a historic pioneer of the climate crisis awareness.

How is it possible that the Treaty No. 3 first nations' final note to Energy East on their lands does not even reach the radar screen of the political pipeline coalition if not a lack of fair representation? Here is a very important aspect as to why first past the post needs to be augmented with such items as preferential ballots and proportional representation.

I think the details of those systems go beyond the scope of a 10-minute presentation, but I do come from some substance here. In the first half of my life, I grew up in West Germany, which actually has a first past the post mixed representation system. I know it in substantial ways. A lot of the flaws that are pointed out can of course easily be avoided by percentage thresholds. We don't want a fragmented House of Commons with 57 parties, like in the Weimar Republic. These things are easily taken care of.

After introducing the vote for women, first nations, non-Caucasians, and non-landowners, electoral reform once again is just catching up a bit further with old aspirations of fair representation. With old aspirations, it is important to invoke the spirit of the foundations of our country, which go back to the great ministry of our first prime minister, Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine and his deputy, Robert Baldwin, who between 1848 and 1851 basically threw out the British landowner system and massively widened the voter base in Canada. This was perhaps the first really significant electoral reform in Canada.

Thanks again.

● (1400)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Becker.

We'll go to Mr. Haase now, please, for 10 minutes.

**Mr. Gerald Haase (Green Party of Canada-Yukon):** Thank you.

Good evening, honourable members of the special committee, and members of the public. I want to thank the committee for coming to Whitehorse and incorporating northern voices into these very important consultations. Thank you also for providing me the opportunity to make this presentation on behalf of the Yukon federal Green Party.

My name is Gerald Haase. I am and have been the riding president of the Yukon federal Green Party for the last two years. That's right: this is the federal party that perhaps was impacted the most by strategic voting in the federal election of 2015. Locally our vote percentage went from 19% in 2011 to 3% in 2015. We were told by many of our supporters that they felt that they had to vote strategically to wrest control away from the previous government.

Some people are saying that Greens across Canada would benefit the most from the move to some form of proportional representation. This may be true at present, and certainly would have been true during the election last October. Most common forms of PR would have awarded the Green Party of Canada more seats than one. However, I think it's clear that the New Democratic Party would have benefited just as well from pretty well any form of PR and certainly, in given circumstances, the Liberals and Conservatives would benefit from proportional representation.

Please reference the Canadian federal election of 1993, in which the Progressive Conservative Party received only two seats despite a 16% popular vote across Canada. The Bloc Québécois, by the way, had 13.5% of the vote and garnered official opposition status with 54 seats. In these cases, the electorate could have benefited by having a governing body in the House of Commons that is significantly more representative of the will of the Canadian people.

Citizens of Canada, the numbers speak for themselves. Even in this great country, where elections are carefully regulated, single member plurality or first past the post does not result in fair election results, especially in current times where more than two political parties run for office.

I think anyone who says that first past the post is the best electoral system for Canada is ignoring a large body of evidence that says otherwise. The Green Party of Canada recognized some time ago that the present electoral system cannot accommodate the cultural diversity and political realities of Canada. We strongly support the present government in its efforts to develop a system of electing the federal representatives that reflects these realities. First past the post is a system of the past for many reasons.

Canada's current first-past-the-post system results in a monopoly of decision-making powers in a rapidly changing global environment where adaptability will be key for successful governance. Really, why should we continue to use a system in which a government chosen with 35% of the popular vote could possibly govern, without checks or balances, a citizenry that basically rejected the policies of this government?

First past the post also can result in, and indeed has resulted in, huge policy swings. Do we really want social, economic, and environmental policies to change radically at the whim of the latest government?

A byproduct of using the first-past-the-post system is the trend of decreasing voter turnout. With many voters turned off by a feeling of disempowerment, and others just seeing no reason to become engaged, fewer citizens are voting. I don't see how anyone can see this as a positive situation.

The winner-take-all scenario that arises from first-past-the-post voting is an illustration of what not to do in political science surveys. Thanks to the work of academics Arend Lijphart, Salomon Orellana, Dennis Pilon, and others, we have social science studies that illustrate that proportional systems outperform first-past-the-post systems in a number of key ways. By trying to make every vote count and allowing for a wider range of views to be represented in Parliament, PR empowers ordinary citizens. This can be expected to have an impact on inequality and access to social services over time and could determine how a country deals with diversity more generally.

• (1405)

This point provides the central argument in a recent book by Salomon Orellana in 2014. The following information comes from Fair Vote Canada's website, where Orellana argues that increased opportunities for diversity and dissent allow PR countries to outperform in four key areas. The number one stated area is policy innovation. One example is how quickly the public accepts and the government can act on new and innovative ideas. The other side of this coin is that these new ideas are vetted by a wider range of participants from varying ideologies, strengthening the innovation.

Point number two made by Orellana is that PR mitigates the pandering of politicians in the pursuit of voters by promising quick-fix solutions. This point I think speaks for itself. A word about that word "pandering"; I searched for a kindler, gentler word to use in a room of politicians, and Microsoft Word gave me nothing. It's buying votes, and we know that this can lead to quick-fix solutions.

Point number three made by Orellana is that PR increases the political sophistication of the electorate. Is this not a laudable goal?

Point number four is that proportional representation limits elite control over decision-making.

In closing, I'd like to commend Fair Vote Canada and say to the committee that this organization has done a lot of groundwork in its presentation to the committee and in providing resources to Canadians engaged in electoral reform. Fair Vote Canada suggests three different electoral systems for consideration. I'm not speaking on behalf of the Green Party at this point, but I believe that each of these systems, as well as the preferential ridings proportional system suggested by Dave Brekke of Whitehorse, would be a huge improvement over our current system.

Voters in over 90 countries around the world are smart enough to figure out PR systems. I'm confident that Canadians are too.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Haase.

We'll now move on to the round of questioning, beginning with Ms. Romanado for five minutes, please.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado (Longueuil—Charles-LeMoine, Lib.):** Thank you so much.

Thank you to our three witnesses today for being here, and of course thank you to the residents of Whitehorse who are here today. It's not every day you want to spend a Monday afternoon in a conference room, so thank you for being here.

I also want to acknowledge that we are meeting on the official territory of the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. Thank you. We're delighted to be here.

Mr. Cameron, I'll just admit that when a couple of us here on the panel saw your name, we wondered if you were the same Kirk Cameron who was on *Growing Pains* when we were children growing up. If so, I want your autograph; otherwise, I still want your autograph.

You talked a little bit about the challenges we have to increase the participation of those who are less likely to be involved in politics. We hear a lot about our first nations, our youth, our visible minorities, and folks who traditionally don't get involved. I'd like to hear your thoughts on what you feel would be the ideal electoral system to increase the participation of these stakeholder groups, not only in voting but in running for office.

• (1410)

**Mr. Kirk Cameron:** Thank you for the question.

You raise a very interesting point. I was in a recent conversation with some individuals, both women, by the way, who were interested in running for city council here in Whitehorse. I was a former city councillor. In both of their cases, they say that life is far too busy for them to take on a role as a city councillor. We thought about whether there are ways in which we could perhaps go after the territorial government to allow some flexibility through the Municipal Act that would allow two individuals, two women, to run for one seat on council, as a novel thought on how to do it.

I realize it's reaching. It's way out there as far as a notion goes, but I think what we have to do is strip away the normal, if you will, and start looking at some creative ideas for those who are economically disadvantaged, those who are life-challenged—I would put a lot of single parents in that particular department—and those individuals who may need some stretching of the boundaries. We have to consider unique ways in which to have them step forward to take on these critical roles within our state and in our society.

In our case in the Yukon territory, we have another level of government. I don't know if you're aware, but thanks to land claims agreements that have been settled in the territory, we now have 11 self-governing Yukon first nations. Interestingly enough, they're reasonably well represented by women in chief and council roles throughout the territory, but I do know that is a very serious consideration. It's a big-time commitment to be involved and engaged at the political level within first nations government, municipal government, territorial government, and indeed federal government here.

I think Larry Bagnell's lifetime commitment to spending his time in airplanes is one of the inhibiting factors we have in such a massive country, where we expect our members of Parliament, certainly at the farthest reaches of the country, to fly the distances they do to be able to be here to represent and speak with Yukoners and bring those thoughts back to Parliament.

That's just scratching the surface. For every topic and for every subject, there's a host of ways in which we could start discussing different avenues to try to accommodate or engage citizens who experience those kind of additional challenges to be reflected in our institutions of government.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** You bring up a good point—I think you're the first person to bring up the idea—about job-sharing, about having, for instance, two women run for the position on council. As you've mentioned, we're hearing that it's not always the electoral system itself that is a barrier for folks to enter politics. You mentioned geography, and the fact that our colleague here in the Yukon spends 16 hours to get to Ottawa every week and back. That is crazy.

We can see that people of Generation X and Generation Y are looking for a work-life balance. They're not going to want to spend that one precious commodity—time—in an airport. It's not value-added and it's not meaningful work for them to be sitting in an airport or in an airplane. What we're seeing is that it's not necessarily only the electoral system and the way we vote that is a hindrance to people to want to seek office.

I love the fact that you brought up job-sharing, because we haven't heard that here before.

•(1415)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Romanado. We have to go on, but that was a very good statement of the situation.

Mr. Reid for five minutes, please.

**Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My questions are for you, Mr. Cameron. You brought up the issue of aboriginal seats, and you gave the example of the Maori seats in New Zealand. They are one of two jurisdictions that are roughly similar to Canada, that I am aware of, that have some form of aboriginal seat, with seven seats in the New Zealand House of Representatives. The Maine state legislature has, as I understand it, four seats that are non-voting and that are assigned to what the Americans would call tribes. There are four different tribes. I was looking this up after your comments. They just added one in for a group that had been neglected in their traditional arrangement.

So the idea has respectable antecedents, and I would have no difficulties seeing at a practical level how it could be implemented within, for example, the Yukon territorial legislature or indeed within the legislature of any Canadian province.

As a practical matter, however, I'm trying to think of how one would do this at our federal level, because that is after all what our mandate is here. Within the Yukon you have one seat to work with. You can see the problem I'm coming at, and it's particularly difficult in the case of your territory, or the Northwest Territories. It's maybe

less problematic if we're talking about one of our provinces and how we deal with their representation.

Could I ask for your thoughts on that practical issue?

**Mr. Kirk Cameron:** Thank you for the question.

You are nailing an incredibly important point, which I would turn back to the committee. Is there a way to find a vehicle to have aboriginal representation guaranteed within the House of Commons? That is the question I ask that the committee also consider. As you are thinking about ways to divide or assign seats from a proportionality perspective, are there ways in which you can do the same thing on a regional basis? Perhaps you use the historic and the numbered treaties. Of course, that then does not include any of the north, because other than a bit of the Northwest Territories, we don't have numbered or historic treaties here. We have modern land claims agreements.

There is a highly complex weave of relationships among various aboriginal groups across the country connecting to our federal system. In short, it will not be easy to figure out what that would look like. I would like to suggest that you speak to the first nations and aboriginal organizations to ask them if they have a sense of how that might be worked out on a national basis.

What do we have, about 640 or 660 distinct aboriginal first nations? In the territory we have the Inuit in the central and eastern Arctic. We have a different set of groups in Yukon, as we do in the Northwest Territories. There is a very complex array of subnationalities within that overall population of Canada, so I would not want to suggest a particular model, but I would recommend that you have that conversation with the aboriginal people of Canada, if you think it does have some merit, to see if there is a way to find that bridge.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** We'll have a chance to do that tomorrow, so your comment is timely.

I wanted to highlight the practical difficulty. Just looking at those two models.... We are at the point now where I get to make a comment. There won't be enough time for you to respond to this, I think. It appears to me that there are things that distinguish New Zealand and Maine from us. Number one, they are a unitary structure, whereas we are federal, and our seats must respect our.... So that's one thing.

Second, in New Zealand their problems are simplified by the fact that they have a single treaty for the entire country, the Treaty of Waitangi, and the Maori are effectively a single nationality. Whether it would be correct to say that they are a single ethnicity, I am not sure, but they are certainly much more homogenous than our Canadian aboriginal people, who are about as homogenous as, say, the people of Europe are.

You suggested using treaties, and it looks like that is what they have done in the case of Maine. They have basically said that the specific separate groups, regardless of population, get a representative; we won't worry about an equal representation in terms of numbers, but it doesn't matter because they are non-voting.

I will stop there because we are out of time, but you have raised some interesting questions. I think that, if we as a group are going to tackle this, we need to be thinking about those kinds of broad questions.

Thank you.

• (1420)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much, Mr. Reid.

Mr. Cullen, go ahead.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our panel. Thank you to the Ta'an Kwäch'an and the Kwanlin Dün, who allow us to do our business on their territory today.

I also welcome Larry, a friend. We have a long-standing debate as to who has the most beautiful riding in Canada. I argue that Yukon is a very close second to Skeena in the northwest of B.C., where I was this past weekend. We had a town hall, talking with Taku River Tlingit and some of the local folks in Atlin. At one point I had to get online while I was in a meeting, and I asked at the coffee shop how the Internet was that day. She said it wasn't bad; it wasn't raining. When it rains, the Internet slows down, because they're on a microwave feed out of Atlin to another tower, to then hook up to the main line, which is a single line south. One mistake and that's it. We all go back to a cash society, trade and barter, and all sorts of those good things that are solid.

I will start with you, Mr. Cameron. I think Mr. Reid asked some very good questions about the practicality, or even the desire, with the first nations leadership and people I work with as to whether they would want allocated seats in the House of Commons. I am not convinced of that yet, but I am open to hearing that conversation, and it is good for the committee to consider.

In terms of the practicality of online, we have been struggling with this. It is a risk-reward question. What reward do you get from allowing greater accessibility and perhaps more people participating versus the risk of either the system being hacked and interfered with or the connectivity to people? Would you imagine the possibility of some sort of hybrid, where some people would vote online and some people would vote in the traditional way? Is that something you would be open to?

**Mr. Kirk Cameron:** Thank you, sir.

Yes, I think that's basically my cautionary note to the committee. No matter what state-of-the-art high-tech approach we move toward, and frankly, I believe we should move in that direction, there's no reason, in the age of the Net, that we shouldn't look at ways in which we can allow for electronic voting. It gives so much more accessibility to the, quote, polls if it's virtual than if you have to go out on a rainy or stormy night to make your way to the polling station.

I'm a big fan of it. I just say let's not necessarily think that it will replace more manual and specific options that need to be there, I think, to ensure that they...individuals in especially more remote and less accessible areas can have.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Yes, it's those two elements. We had people who work in the high-tech community come forward to this committee and flatly tell us not to do it, even though that's what their business is, simply because we can't guarantee. There's no such thing as a 100% secure system. That gives one pause. We talked about it as well for military personnel serving overseas, wondering if that would be secure, or a good idea.

I want to talk about a different kind of connectivity. I'll ask you this and then I'll go to Mr. Haase. You indicated I believe in your statement the openness to a proportional system or systems, in which the percentage of vote is reflected into the House of Commons; that then affects how policies are made, not unilaterally by one party in most cases; yet a connectivity remains, a geographic one, specifically in places like Yukon, where the idea that there would ever be a blended representation, in which you didn't know or didn't have someone specifically sent from this land, from this area....

Am I summarizing your comments right, that you would be open to it but you seek to maintain that idea of direct representation, geographic representation?

**Mr. Kirk Cameron:** That's correct. In short, I don't think we should ignore the fact that we have these subnational geographies in this country. We're split up into 13 parts for a good reason. We should not ignore that reality and the social and cultural connectivity that exists within each of those regions. That sense of identity, that sense of place, is very important to who we are as citizens of the country and citizens of the particular region in which we live. I don't think whatever model you look at should stray across those kinds of boundaries and suggest something else.

• (1425)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Haase, perhaps you'd like to answer the same question in the time remaining. It's with regard to the proposal of a blended system in which some seats are proportional, yet we maintain the seats that are directly geographic.

**The Chair:** Be fairly brief, please.

**Mr. Gerald Haase:** I think this could be achieved. I believe Fair Vote Canada submitted such a proposal, called "Rural-Urban Proportional". There are ways to achieve it. I'm certainly opposed to large party lists.

In the case of the north, I think it's important to vote an MP in your area, but I don't see any reason why there couldn't be an additional two MPs, say, representing the north on a proportional basis.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go now to Mr. Ste-Marie—

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Sorry, Mr. Chair, I don't usually do this, but I want to clarify that last position of the witness.

Are you suggesting additional MPs across the entire north, or do you mean just the Yukon?

**Mr. Gerald Haase:** It would be some form of proportional representation across the north. That would be Nunavut and—

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Okay: the entire north.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Ste-Marie, you have the floor.

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie (Joliette, BQ):** Good afternoon, gentlemen.

I'd like to say hello to everyone who came out to see us today. It's a pleasure to meet you.

I'd like to extend a special hello to Mr. Bagnell and Mr. Kelly, who are joining us today.

**The Chair:** Pardon me, Mr. Ste-Marie.

[*English*]

I'd like to let the people in the audience know that there are earpieces for picking up simultaneous interpretation.

**Mr. Kirk Cameron:** While we're waiting, perhaps I could quickly respond to one of Mr. Cullen's comments about whether there's the desire for some form of aboriginal representation in the House of Commons.

I want to refer you back to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. I think they spent a considerable amount of time talking to aboriginal citizens across the country on the very topic of a first people's legislative body of some kind connected to the House of Commons. There seemed to be at that point in time a fair amount of interest in it. Maybe that has changed, but I'd just like to point you in that direction.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[*Translation*]

You'll have an extra minute, Mr. Ste-Marie. Go ahead.

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** I'd like to acknowledge everyone who is here today: audience members, witnesses, colleagues, and staff.

I'm pleased to be in Whitehorse, Yukon. It's my first time here, and what a wonderful place it is.

Yukon has just one member of Parliament, Mr. Bagnell. If we were to adopt some form of proportional representation, it would be problematic for your territory, since you have just one MP. Achieving some sense of proportionality would be hard under such a system.

I don't think the government wants to open up the Constitution and seek the provinces' consent to amend it in order to change the voting system. What it wants is electoral reform within the existing confines of the Constitution. Even if an element of proportional representation were added, it would have to stay at the provincial level. At the territorial level, it could be a bit different. Mr. Cameron said he didn't want to see Yukon connected to British Columbia or the Northwest Territories.

Do you have any solutions you can suggest for Yukon? Would it involve adding a seat or grouping it with the Northwest Territories or British Columbia?

That's my first question. You can each answer in turn, beginning with Mr. Haase.

• (1430)

**Mr. Gerald Haase:** Are you asking how we work with—

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** How can we achieve some form of proportional representation in Yukon, which has just one seat? What solutions would you suggest?

**Mr. Gerald Haase:** That's exactly what I said. We could elect one representative in each territory. Next, we could give another seat to one or two members from the proportional representation lists.

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** From a constitutional perspective, the lists have to be province-based. Does that mean Yukon's votes would be transferred to British Columbia, or would the Northwest Territories and Yukon have another MP?

**Mr. Gerald Haase:** I would suggest that the other votes not represent southern British Columbia, only Canada's north.

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Thank you.

What about you, Mr. Cameron?

[*English*]

**Mr. Kirk Cameron:** Thank you for that question.

I'll be quite frank with you, I don't see the need to reform to connect somehow proportionality to something called the region called north. I just don't believe that's necessary. We have 38,000 people in the Yukon territory. I don't even know if that's a small riding in southern Ontario or B.C. or many of the other more populous areas of the country. Frankly, we have one seat. I don't personally look at proportionality as connecting fairness in a particular region as I do seeing it on a national scale.

So to my way of thinking, 38,000 people were well represented with one member of Parliament. The entire proportionality will bring the numbers far more in line across the entire country, if indeed a proportional model is accepted that will get whatever that percentage is close to the percentage of seats in the House of Commons, and that's fine by me. I do not want, in any way, to erode the character of Yukon, of Northwest Territories, of Nunavut, or for that matter of any province of the country, by somehow suggesting that we should be considered in some kind of homogenous way.

That's my two cents' worth.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Thank you.

Where do you stand, Mr. Becker?

**Mr. Peter Becker:** Thank you very much, Mr. Ste-Marie.

[English]

I think one has to face reality. If there's going to be a proportional system, or even preferential ballots, and the characteristic of distinct regions is retained, there will have to be some deeper change. Either ridings will be reshaped somehow or the number of MPs will have to increase. I think the functional international examples on those technicalities are pretty clear. From the models I have been reading through, we shouldn't be afraid of that, because ours is not a European text-based constitution. Our constitution provides political stability because it changes. We are not Euro-American constitution-based. We have a very different system. We might have to have courage for a few things that cut a little deeper, but in the spirit of building consensus, we shouldn't be afraid of that.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go now to Ms. May.

**Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our witnesses. It's good to see all of you again. I happen to have met you all before, so I'm very happy to be back in Whitehorse again and back in Yukon.

I'm always drawn to Robert Service. As you were testifying, Kirk, I was thinking, boy, there were strange things done in the midnight sun by the men who moiled for gold—like trying to steal your democracy over and over again. That didn't ever get celebrated by Robert Service, but it's a timely reminder.

I want to put a question to all three of you. One of our witnesses was our former chief electoral officer, Jean-Pierre Kingsley. I don't know if you've seen his evidence, but I'll summarize. He proposed that for practical purposes, a way to provide proportionality in our Parliament and eliminate unfair voting without increasing the number of seats in Parliament and without creating a politically driven list system would be to cluster those ridings that you can in urban areas in southern Canada through single transferable vote, and leave the territories alone. This of course raises the question of how people in the territories would feel about knowing that all Canadians were going to get fairer voting except the territories.

Does that speak to the importance of the point that you made, Kirk, that we don't want to do anything that is disrespectful to the identity of northerners, who have a very distinct and different political past?

I think I'll just go down the row and start with Gerald, then go to Kirk, and then Peter if that's okay. With any luck, I might still have time for another question.

• (1435)

**Mr. Gerald Haase:** Well, it's damned if you do and damned if you don't, eh? I think that's what the committee is tasked with. The committee is never going to please everyone in this country.

Personally, yes, it is a bit of a sacrifice for northerners, I think, to view that as not having the proportionality that the rest of Canada enjoys. However, the flip side of the coin is the representation. You know that person is from Yukon or from the NWT or from Nunavut, and most people have pretty good access to their MPs in the north despite the large distances.

I guess that's all I can say on that.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Thank you.

**Mr. Kirk Cameron:** Thank you for your question and your comment.

I'm with Jean-Pierre Kingsley. I think that's completely workable. I would like to suggest that when we talk about proportionality, when we talk about fairness within our electoral system, we think nationally. That's where the proportionality question becomes useful. It isn't so much then connecting specifically with a particular region in the country. It's about saying that we have this amazing country; we want to ensure that when we look at the members who are representing us in Parliament, it roughly connects to the number of votes that a particular party got within the country, not particularly a region but the country in its entirety.

I go back to my earlier point. We're a very small riding when it comes to population. I think we should take comfort in knowing that we are well reflected and represented in the national office. But I would not want to see a member of Parliament from, say, Yellowknife residing in Yellowknife and looking after the business of Yukon. You have no idea how difficult it is to get across. Up until recently, when Air North, Yukon's airline, put on a flight, it was a tough time moving down to Vancouver, over to Calgary or Edmonton, and back up to Yellowknife. It was about a day's travel to get to Yellowknife, which is just across the way in the Northwest Territories.

To think of us as somehow being an easy fit, with 40% of the land mass of Canada and a sizeable percentage of the coastline.... The north is pan-national as much as any parts of the south. I think we need to leave it to that, and leave it to its three distinct regions. That is my perspective.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** I have about 20 seconds left, Peter, if you want to weigh in on the idea of leaving the territories alone and providing proportionality for the rest of Canada.

**Mr. Peter Becker:** I think we should not do that. I would build on Mr. Cameron's comment of pan-nationality. The relation of the majority and minorities in Canada is truly distinct. In the western world it's a completely different constitutional history. We don't have a majority that assumes power and brings out the artillery against minorities. This is the fundamental question. We don't want to bring structures in here that will again hurt minorities like first nations.

The relevance of the north is twofold. We have our own value, but we are also an important piece of the Canadian identity. The former premier of the Yukon, Tony Penikett, pointed out that the Yukon, in his view, was the last Canadian jurisdiction to go out of the egalitarian political business. So if the Yukon loses, and Nunavut loses, all of Canada loses.

It is a deep question, and a profound question, and we should not escape the truth of this electoral reform when it comes to the practical details. That would be un-Canadian, certainly in the legacy of our country.

• (1440)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. DeCoursey now, please.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey (Fredericton, Lib.):** Thank you.

To the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and Kwanlin Dün First Nation, *mahsi cho* for allowing us to be here and inviting us to take part in this conversation today. I'm particularly pleased to be here, having travelled the furthest, from New Brunswick, to join everyone here today. I had the chance to view some of the sites around Whitehorse with my colleague Larry.

One of the questions I was going to pose to Mr. Cameron was about maintaining the single district seats in the territories, but that's been answered quite adequately. I was just going to contextualize it in relation to the average size of ridings across the country being approximately 100,000 members. Even in my province of New Brunswick, we're below the average, but still at 75,000 members in a riding, give or take some. That puts it all into perspective. The question was going to be whether northerners would be okay maintaining that distinct single-member riding status if a proportional system were developed elsewhere in the country, but the answer that this is a pan-Canadian project, and northerners would see it as such, suffices.

Do you think there's still a way to properly validate the legitimacy of a proposal with Canadians? In your view, what do you think northerners, people in the Yukon, would want as a way to let Parliament know that they were in favour of a new proposal being put up against the current single-member plurality system?

I'll start with you, Mr. Cameron.

[Translation]

Thank you.

[English]

**Mr. Kirk Cameron:** Thank you for that question.

First let me comment on the fact that I'm also very clear that I don't speak for all Yukoners either, or for that matter any group across the north.

Your question is well taken, because I think it is important, at the end of the day, when you form your approach, to reach back out to Canadians, that you have some tool or some mechanism to gain receptivity across the country. I would say that includes the north. I like a multi-stage approach to this. I like an avenue where you could come back out and test the waters, not necessarily through a formal, blinding referendum or other form of voting system, but to test the waters so see where and how Canadians are happy with what you are proposing.

I believe, in the case of New Zealand, they took four models back out to citizens and said, okay, tell us which one you like the most and give us a sense of your views of the others. They got that more informal feedback first, before the formal question was put to citizenry around a single model, as in "Do you accept or reject the particular model that now seems to be your preferred approach?"

I like that. I think something of that nature would work quite well in Canada, especially given the diversity of regions that we face here in the country. You'd be able to get a good feel of where Canadians

are coming from, depending on their region and depending on how they look at their place within this country.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** Thank you.

Mr. Becker, I want to give you a chance to answer the same question. As well, you made a couple of glancing comments on augmenting first past the post with preferential balloting. Maybe you want to comment a bit further on what you envision there.

**Mr. Peter Becker:** From any reading I have done that looked at serious systems—I'm perhaps not as well informed as some people, such as Mr. Dave Brekke—people knew a lot more about the systems after questioning and discussing the systems, and it always seemed to come down to a component of first past the post still being retained in those systems. I think there is a bit of fear. What is the leeway in terms of accommodating this profound need for electoral reform? I think the elbow room we have to accomplish this goal also has to do with how we are communicating it. I would just like to refer to my starting point, that since in the core area the first past the post would be retained—from all the systems I can imagine—we should speak plainly to the country about that, and say that first past the post will stay as part of electoral reform. The conversation and the preparedness for change might all of a sudden be much better.

So far Canadians don't have much of an idea of the details that are being talked about. We could, in an honest way and with some wisdom, actually help this discussion by having better-thought-out headlines of these kinds of discussions.

•(1445)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Monsieur Deltell.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell (Louis-Saint-Laurent, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Fellow members, witnesses, ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to say what a great privilege it is for me to be here with you today.

I'm a guy from Quebec City. I've lived my whole life there. Nevertheless, I would say it's always been not so much a dream—so as not to overstate things—but, rather, a secret ambition to one day come to the Northwest Territories or Yukon in Canada's north. And now I've realized that ambition. Long live democracy and long live Canada. It illustrates this country's strength, vastness, and power. Your being here today is a testament to this community's vitality. I want to express my utmost respect for my fellow member Larry Bagnell, who not only represents his constituents, but also takes on so much work and travel to represent them in Ottawa.

[English]

Mr. Cameron, you raised a question because of the quite good question raised by my colleague from the Bloc Québécois, Mr. Ste-Marie, about how we could deal with the fact that this is a big issue here. We could open the door sometime to having proportional representation, but it's quite difficult to have proportional representation where there is only one riding for one territory or province.

You said that Yellowknife and Whitehorse are quite different. This is not a scientific example, but this morning I woke up very early to enjoy the fact that I was here, in some tourism, but first and foremost, I spoke with people. I took a coffee break at a famous Canadian coffee restaurant and I chatted with some people. Those people were *à la retraite* from CBC—so, natural friends of ours, that you can believe.

I told them I was very pleased because in three days' time I would be going to Yellowknife. Geez, what did I say? It was such a great mistake. They said, "Don't compare Yellowknife to Whitehorse. It's incredible. It's more than Quebec City to Montreal." Then we talked about the Quebec Nordiques and the Montreal Canadiens, the good old days. For a story it's funny, but it's the reality.

Mr. Cameron, I want to again ask you the question of Mr. Ste-Marie from the Bloc Québécois, which was quite accurate. How could you deal with the fact that you want to have proportional representation, even if you have only one riding in Yukon, one riding in TNO, and one riding in Nunavut?

**Mr. Kirk Cameron:** Thank you for the question.

I don't see it. Again, I would not want to create a structure... because in the context of proportionality, you want to connect in some way, and create some kinds of super ridings.... That's unless you create another 338 ridings and pop them over top of each of the...which I believe is bordering on ludicrous.

You want to build some kind of regionality in your structure so that you can create these super regions that then connect to that other list of individuals who then represent you in Parliament. I don't want us to be connected to B.C. I don't want us to be connected to the Northwest Territories. It's not that I have anything against them, but I don't want to have a situation where my member of Parliament is in Ottawa and somehow ends up in a caucus meeting of some kind—I can only imagine what that might look like—where he then has to go up against one of those proportional MPs and maybe that person is from Nunavut, Iqaluit, or Yellowknife. All of a sudden within the institutional structure you've created a new tension, a new battleground in which my MP has to defend my interest in Yukon against those of other particular areas of the north, which frankly have very, very different political, social, and economic agendas—very, very different.

• (1450)

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Isn't it a clear indication that it's dreaming; that it's a situation that cannot pass the reality check?

**Mr. Kirk Cameron:** I don't think I want to play with that. I want to leave it as it is now, where we have a member of Parliament who represents us in Ottawa in a way that truly reflects the Yukon and does not reflect any other super connection with some other region in the country.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Okay, so how do you think it can apply somewhere else in this country to have proportional representation?

**Mr. Kirk Cameron:** My sense would be that let's say you created an area or a region that was Vancouver proper, a greater Vancouver area. And I don't recall how many MPs represent the greater Vancouver region, but it's—

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** But you know, there are differences, and I know what I'm talking about, as I've been in politics for around the last 10 years. I've been elected four times. I'm close to my people, and people are close to me. For everybody here it's exactly the same thing. I'm not better than anyone else; everyone is close to their people.

If you cut the link between the people and the MP, well, as far as I'm concerned, you've cut a huge part of democracy.

**The Chair:** Yes.

We'll have to go on now to Ms. Sahota.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota (Brampton North, Lib.):** Thank you.

Thank you for being here today.

I'm trying to figure all this out, because everyone has a slightly different opinion, and that's what we've been grappling with as we've been touring the country. I have a question for all the panellists.

Would you feel that it is okay to have one system of voting for some parts of the country and a different system of voting for other parts of the country under this system that Kingsley has proposed, and one that you think would be okay, Mr. Cameron? You would still be voting under first past the post, while other provinces in the country would then be moving on to a proportional system, perhaps have a split ballot, be voting for a party and a local candidate. Do you think that would seem fair to the people of Yukon?

**Mr. Peter Becker:** Very briefly, I think it would not be fair. I think if there is going to be a proportional component, Yukon should be part of it. It will take some detailed changes throughout the contest, but the spirit of the principle should be the same. For example, I disagree with some of the comments that I heard here. Let's say a proportionally elected list candidate: there could be one list candidate for three northern territories, and that would perhaps result in a slight increase of numbers of MPs, but only slightly. It would not create chaos. And no, this candidate is not a problem, because he's not purely representing Yukon, Nunavut, or NWT.

I can give one very powerful example, because I spent half my life in a first-past-the-post mixed proportional system. One of the most excellent projects on a global scale in the last 25 years came from a list candidate from the Social Democratic Party in Germany. Hermann Scheer initiated the renewable energy source legislation, passed in 1999, which became the model for renewable energy in China, Denmark, and many countries. This was widely accepted.

Excellent people who come in as a list candidate are looked at and judged by different agendas and represent communities very well with somewhat different aspects from the first-past-the-post candidate from Yukon, Nunavut, and the Northwest Territories. They're just throwing this out wisely; we may have one proportional representation counted out for these territories. From half of my life experience, this could work very well.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Mr. Cameron, you were referencing earlier the struggle that the candidates may have trying to represent all across the northern region versus maybe the struggle between the local candidate and that candidate. Do you think, under the system proposed by Mr. Becker, that would exist as well, or do you think that could be worked out by having that one proportional or two proportional candidates?

• (1455)

**Mr. Kirk Cameron:** Thank you.

I still go back to my point. I think each of the three territories is quite distinct in our connection to Canada. I like Kingsley's idea of these two different ways of cutting it across Canada. I go back to my earlier point, which is that we need to look at this as a national question, not as any regional question.

I recall a couple of elections ago a new ministry was put in place in Ottawa, and there was this great question of who was going to get the northern minister in the new cabinet. I remember a certain individual was appointed Minister of Health, I believe, from Iqaluit, from Nunavut. Of course Yukoners were all incensed about how it was possible that they could be represented at the cabinet table by somebody that far away.

That was really a visceral reaction to the fact that the north is just so big. It is a vast territory, and each of the regions is very distinct. I think there's more of a homogeneity if you were to look at a number of ridings in Montréal, or in Vancouver, or in Calgary than to think that somehow Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut would have that same sense of common cause, common interest. I just don't buy that.

Thank you.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Mr. Haase, do you have any comments about fairness, or...?

**The Chair:** Please be very brief.

**Mr. Gerald Haase:** I agree with Mr. Becker. I don't see a problem with having a couple of proportional representatives across the north, group the three territories into a super riding. We would still have our own MP, plus a couple of other MPs. I think the extra expense is worth it. And in this new spirit of cooperation that proportional representation would yield in Parliament, I think our differences could be overcome.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Monsieur Boulérice.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulérice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to thank the witnesses joining us today as well as those who have gone out of their way to be here for this important discussion. This is a fundamental debate that will have an impact on our democratic quality of life.

I'm very glad to be in Whitehorse today, my first trip here ever. This morning, like Mr. Deltell, I took advantage of our visit to go for a long walk and take in the incredibly impressive landscape.

I represent a riding in Montreal, probably the polar opposite of yours. My riding is home to 110,000 people who live in an area that spans 11 square kilometres.

I was going to ask a question along the same lines as those of Ms. May, Mr. Ste-Marie, and Ms. Sahota. In other words, I was going to ask about the Kingsley system and two possible ways of distributing seats within the federation. You provided a rather thorough answer, aside from the nuances still needed in terms of an MP representing a possible northern super-riding.

You could say the committee's mandate is to achieve proportionality, but its mandate is actually to replace the first-past-the-post system. One way of doing that is to combine ridings so that four, five, or six MPs represent a larger area.

Obviously, no one here is considering merging Yukon or the Northwest Territories with anything. That would be totally ridiculous. Don't worry. In Montreal or Toronto, however, that would work quite well. Voters probably wouldn't even notice.

Mr. Cameron, without setting aside seats for first nations people or the Innu, what can we do to improve voter turnout among those communities and encourage more of their members to stand as candidates? I'm referring to a system that resembles the current one. Do you have any ideas in that regard?

[*English*]

**Mr. Kirk Cameron:** That's a difficult question.

First of all, this is a bit of geography. It is 440,000 square kilometres for Yukon—I don't know if you knew that—as compared with your 11 kilometres.

That goes back to the point that Mr. Kingsley raised in his presentation to you about this whole notion that Canadians must be able to see themselves in their representatives and the system by which they choose them. I think that's at the very heart of where I come from as well. I believe he very articulately stated that to you.

Right now, in many respects, and in many parts of the country, first nation and aboriginal people do not see their connection to the institutions of government in the country. I think we're light years ahead in Yukon because so much of the premise behind the land claims and self-government agreements that we have negotiated here in Yukon are about co-management and about the reflection of identity inside institutions of public government that have been set up under those treaties and documents.

A good example, and I happen to sit as a federal representative on it, is the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Board. There's a very elaborate process through which federal, territorial, and first nation governments appoint or recommend appointments to that body so that it is truly an independent, co-managed structure in the Yukon territory that does all environmental assessment for all parts of the territory, whether federal, territorial, or first nation lands. That's a big deal, because now, if you can imagine, first nation citizens may not like what that body does in terms of an environmental assessment, but at least they see their connection to it. They know there are people they can go to and complain to who are there in every respect representing their interests, or in some respects. We have the water board, which has its own jurisdiction as well, set up in a reflection under the land claim agreement.

So many of the aspects of land and resource management in the territory find their way to connect the aboriginal interests and identity to the institutions of public government. I think we need to drill into that as to whether it's possible at the parliamentary level as well.

• (1500)

[Translation]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Thank you.

Mr. Haase, you said proportional representation would be the most beneficial system for the Green Party. You are partly right. As I see it, it's the system that would be most beneficial for democracy overall.

The current system is especially unfair. On average, 38,000 votes were needed to elect every Liberal member, 48,000 votes were needed to elect every Conservative member, 78,000 votes were needed to elect every NDP member, 82,000 votes were needed to elect every Bloc Québécois member, and 603,000 votes were needed to elect every Green Party member. That's particularly inequitable.

I'd like to hear you comment on how a more proportional system would also be more equitable for all voters. It would ensure a fair expression of their voice to Parliament.

**The Chair:** Unfortunately, we have to move on to Mr. Kelly.

[English]

You can save that answer for the next round. It's just that we are over time, and we have to go to Mr. Kelly. I'm sorry about that.

Mr. Kelly.

**Mr. Pat Kelly (Calgary Rocky Ridge, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Likewise, I am here in Whitehorse for my first time in the Yukon. It's my pleasure to be here. My only regret is that I will be here for such a short period of time that I won't be able to see the sights and enjoy the beautiful scenery, but I certainly hope to come back.

Perhaps I could return to you, Mr. Cameron. At the end of my colleague Mr. Deltell's questions, we were heading toward what I am trying to really get a sense for, the importance you place upon some form of proportionality. If I understand you correctly, you do not want to see proportional representation applied to the territories, in recognition of the unique character of each of the three territories and

the fact that the small population size of each territory certainly does not warrant the addition of new seats, given that each territory is substantially represented for its population when compared with any other part of the country, with the exception perhaps of Prince Edward Island.

Is this something that you think is very important for Canada? There are some circles where it may sound like, well, proportional representation is good for other people, but not good for us. There may well be urban voters in the southern parts of Canada who are also attached to a neighbourhood and to the connection with members of Parliament and would feel unrepresented if their local member were not indeed a local member.

• (1505)

**Mr. Kirk Cameron:** Thank you for that.

I have an idea; I'm always good for those. It could be quite simple. Maybe springboarding off Mr. Kingsley's idea of two separate ways of cutting this one, why don't we just add one MP to each of the three territories? That will give us a better reflection in Parliament as three distinct parts of the country. Then the proportionality question can be dealt with for the rest of Canada. We'll just take an extra MP for each of the three. How does that sound?

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Well, it sounds like something that might play better locally here than elsewhere.

Do you favour, then, proportional representation outside of the territories, or do you feel comfortable that first past the post, especially in the case of the Yukon, where you have your own member, addresses the needs of northern communities that you explained very well, which was very beneficial for our committee to hear?

**Mr. Kirk Cameron:** Thank you for that. I really do wish to say that I look at this as a national question. I do not look at this as regional or Yukon-specific, even though I am fiercely defensive of the interests of the Yukon. When it comes to the question of representation in Parliament, I think generally there is a disconnect between the popular vote and the way that translates into seats in Parliament. Yes, I believe some form of proportional system would get us closer, so that most, if not all, Canadians could see themselves more appropriately reflected in the breakdown of seats in the House of Commons.

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Okay.

Maybe I will switch to the first point you raised in your address, about the business of looking at online voting. Many Canadians would perhaps intuitively think that a very large riding would lend itself well to that, with the ease of being able to vote and reducing the burdens of travel. You raised the technological and connectivity issues.

Perhaps I will ask each panellist to quickly give his thoughts, because I am not sure we explored that fully with each panellist.

**Mr. Gerald Haase:** Online, yes: only online, no. I don't see any reason to throw something that's working out the door.

**Mr. Kirk Cameron:** Online if it's going to assist and add to what we have.

**Mr. Peter Becker:** I agree with the two other panellists.

I would just like to expand for a moment, because we are a little stuck with the proportional aspect: are we going to give the north another MP or not? The other question was how to increase first nations representation, which is also important. Maybe the two overlap, and then they become easier to solve. If there is one extra MP for the three northern territories, for example, with 24% first nations and first nations majority in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, there is a very high chance to actually have another first nations member of Parliament if we have that component.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We will go to Mr. Aldag.

**Mr. John Aldag (Cloverdale—Langley City, Lib.):** Thank you.

It is a pleasure to be back in the Yukon. I had the opportunity to live in the Northwest Territories prior to division, and also a number of years in the Yukon. I was just reflecting how when I lived in the Northwest Territories, I took my holidays one year and drove to Inuvik. Anybody who lives in the north knows what that kind of journey entails. I also had the privilege of managing a number of Parks Canada locations in the Yukon, and have been from the Chilkoot Trail through to Old Crow. I don't have the same sense of appreciation as all of you do, but I have experienced a lot of the land, and it is magnificent. I am glad to be back.

As I was listening to your testimony and your thoughts about electoral change, I realized there are population changes and geography changes. We talk about how all the territories can really wish for is to retain what they have now, and there wasn't a great reception of the idea of adding another member of Parliament for each of the three territories, but we can dream big, and we can ask. Who knows where that might go?

Mr. Cameron, when you were talking, I liked your idea of not having to focus specifically on territorial proportionality, that it can be achieved on a national basis, but in your comments you are talking about voters having to choose, not parties for the choice. Were you actually referring to the idea, in a proportional representation system, of open list versus closed list? Is that what you meant? Were you talking about the kind of list, as a proportional representation thing, or something else?

• (1510)

**Mr. Kirk Cameron:** Yes, I was assuming that a list would be created that would connect super regions, if you will, super constituencies across the country. In the case of the north, I am suggesting that because of the differences among the three territories, a north list would not be one that I would want to see put in place to determine how we would select those additional list MPs, if you will.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Okay. Where I'm going, and it may be contrary to that, is thinking about whether you could actually have these national lists for proportionality. There are terms like "zippered lists", where you do male-female to ensure gender balance. Could you just slide northern representatives onto a national list so that if a party doesn't do well and they get to bring in people from their list, the north could actually get an extra seat that way? It raises the challenge of which territory gets on there. Maybe you alternate from election to election.

I just wanted to clarify that. I'm trying to see if there is any legitimate way of getting you guys an extra seat that Canadians might buy.

**Mr. Kirk Cameron:** So we'd be represented, then, once every three governments, every three elections.

**Mr. John Aldag:** As you say, I'm trying to find something. Is that better than nothing, or what is the solution?

The other thing I wanted to throw out to all three of you, before I run out of time, is simply this. As we look at this, I think values need to guide a lot of what we are doing. The northerners are a particular breed. Are there any particular values you would like to throw out to us? As you've heard, many of my colleagues haven't been here before. As northerners, what values would you like us to consider in the design of a new electoral system?

Mr. Haase, do you want to throw out anything that comes to mind? Then we will just go down the table.

**Mr. Gerald Haase:** I would say that openness is a value that people feel in the north. A lot of people feel it when they arrive in the north for the first time, certainly in the Yukon. What that means is....

It is certainly an individually felt quality, and I am finding it very hard to describe. I guess I am drawing on personal experience here. In rural and northern areas, it is much easier to meet people, talk with people, and engage in conversations with people of different political stripes.

I think that is the quality that I would look to in the north, an openness to engagement. We have to be adaptable, and with this openness comes adaptability.

**Mr. Kirk Cameron:** May I?

**The Chair:** Answer very briefly, please.

**Mr. Kirk Cameron:** I think we got dangerously close to it earlier in some of the questions and conversations we had. I think it is about innovation, thinking outside the box, and stretching the boundaries, so that we think about questions like we spoke to on city council, who shared employment, those kinds of things. Why don't we think outside the box when it comes to many of the challenges of identity that connect not just Yukoners but also Canadians to Parliament?

• (1515)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We will have to go to—

**Mr. Peter Becker:** I think if you [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** Mr. Becker, can you make it 10 seconds?

**Mr. Peter Becker:** Inclusivity is important; intercultural versus multicultural tolerance; and the foundations of our country, which are ethics- and ideas-based versus religion-based or single language or race or skin in terms of other cultures. That also speaks to the point of closed and open lists, which I believe can be combined.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Thank you to the panel. It was the first opportunity we had to really think about how the north, and particularly the Yukon, would fit into this exercise of electoral reform. It has been very interesting to hear your informed views and insights on this matter. Speaking for myself, I have a much clearer understanding of how things would work, given the population and the unique identities, which you really brought out as a theme and which it is good to know.

Before we go to the next panel, we will have a small break of let's say four minutes. Four minutes means five, but we'll say it's four and we know it's five.

Thank you.

• (1515) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

• (1525)

**The Chair:** For those in the back of the hall, we are resuming the meeting.

We'll now move on to our second panel. We have two witnesses, Mr. David Brekke and Mr. John Streicker for 10 minutes each. Each panellist will have 10 minutes to present.

Both of you will speak, and then we'll have a round of questions. Each member of Parliament will be able to engage the witnesses for five minutes, including questions and answers. If you don't have time to provide the answer within that five minutes, there's nothing preventing you from providing it the next time you have the floor. Not to worry, there will be an opportunity to share your views.

We'll start with Mr. Brekke for 10 minutes, please.

• (1530)

**Mr. David Brekke (As an Individual):** Good afternoon, everyone.

I would first like to say thank you to the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council for hosting this event on their traditional land, and to the Parliament of Canada for giving us the opportunity to submit our thoughts on reforming our country's electoral system.

As you may know, our current system, often called first past the post, is in dire need of revision. Essentially, it makes it possible for a party that won a minority of the possible votes to form a government, and sometimes a majority government—in fact, a good deal of the time a majority government—that can impose its will despite the fact that the majority of the citizenry voted against it. The only voters who have an effect on the formation of the elected governing body are the voters who voted for the winner of their riding.

It doesn't have to be that way. All votes could count. A majority of first world nations, with the United States and Great Britain being notable exceptions, have replaced this less than democratic system with systems designed to more accurately reflect the will of the majority of their citizens.

The system I am submitting for consideration would go a very long way toward redressing the current unfairness of first past the post and yet would be simple in nature. Fundamentally, the number of ridings would be cut in half by joining adjacent ridings.

Maybe before I go any further, that was a major focus of the responses I received from people, that we don't want any more politicians; that you get so many in there, and then nobody has any effect; please, no more politicians.

**The Chair:** Except for the members on this committee.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. David Brekke:** Sorry: yes, okay.

The number of ridings would be cut in half by joining adjacent ridings, so we'd end up with paired ridings, but the number of representatives from the overall area would remain the same. One candidate would be elected as a result of a preferential ballot count for the riding. The second would then be chosen from the remaining candidates to reflect the percentage of votes won by the political parties running in that electoral area.

I'd just like to say that the goal of this preferential ridings proportional system is to use inclusion and connection to build community into governance. I don't know of anybody who wouldn't like to see that. It is my hope that this new combination system is helpful to the special committee in designing Canada's future system. This preferential ridings proportional system is PRP. PRP is a hybrid system with desirable aspects of several systems. It has ridings, and it has preferential voting to select the most wanted candidate in each riding and also the party for proportional representation.

Reorganization is needed for implementing this system, but I think it's very simplified by using the present boundary lines and election structure. It would fit relatively easily into the present electoral structure that we have, which I think is a great benefit.

I wasn't able to get our Chief Electoral Officer to respond to me, but if you would like to put it forward, I'd certainly appreciate that. The question of what we could save here, in time and cost, will come later.

If we now look at the first handout, it's the 2008 election results for the Ottawa electoral area. Applying this system to those results in 2008, the number of effective voters—people who could point to a member that they elected—went from 47% to 91%. That's without their second- or third-choice votes, which we now have, or would have.

Does everybody have the example of Ottawa to look at?

• (1535)

**The Chair:** It's in the process of being translated. Until it's available in both official languages, we can't distribute it to the committee members.

**Mr. David Brekke:** Right. Okay, thanks. I put it in your email, but I couldn't translate it into French. I'm sorry.

In the 2008 Ottawa election results, using the current first-past-the-post system, we dealt with six riding seats in Ottawa. The popular vote was Conservatives 39%, Greens 8%, Liberals 36%, and NDP 16%. Sorry to give you all these numbers. At any rate, this is what we ended up with. The Conservatives won three seats, so they got 50% of the representation with 38% of the vote. The Greens, with 8%, got zero. The Liberals, with 36%, received two, so they ended up with 33%, which is pretty close. The NDP received one, and they were very close, with 16% to 17%.

The total effective voters at that time was 47%. That means 47% of the voters could point to somebody that their vote helped to elect. And that's voters, not eligible voters. Those are the people who went out and voted.

Now, how are the proportional seats won using the PRP system, the preferential ridings proportional system? I've asked if it's simple enough. I hope you're going to find it simple enough, but you might not. I'm sure you'll let me know if it isn't. The electoral area of Ottawa had six seats, each seat to represent 16.7% of the vote. Instead of the six riding seats, by pairing the ridings we end up with three riding seats plus three proportional seats for Ottawa. There is no change with the popular vote, but since we only have three ridings now, two riding seats would have been won by the Conservatives and one by the Liberals. We have three proportional seats left, so the Conservatives now have 33% of their votes represented with two seats out of six, and the Liberals have 17% of their votes with one out of six seats: fair enough? The representation was 33% and 17% respectively for them.

What we're trying to do here is to give meaning to the people whose vote is not yet represented. For the unrepresented votes remaining, the Conservatives would have 5%, the Greens 8%, the Liberals 19%, and NDP 16.18%, not quite enough for a seat. We look, first of all, at fully supported proportional seats. There would only be one fully supported proportional seat, and that would be by the Liberals. When they receive their seat, what's the percentage of unrepresented votes remaining? Well, it's 5.6%, 8%, 3%, and 16%, not—

• (1540)

**The Chair:** We're running out of time a bit.

**Mr. David Brekke:** Oh, no kidding: already.

**The Chair:** I do have a question, though. Under your system, the Conservatives get two instead of three because they don't get any proportional seats. For the Greens...

I don't quite understand. I know the question period is for the other members, but what's the difference between fully supported proportional seats and partially supported proportional seats?

**Mr. David Brekke:** They have 16.7% of the vote. For instance, in the electoral area of Ottawa, we have six ridings. With six ridings, it's 16.7% of the vote that each member would be representing.

**The Chair:** Okay.

We'll get to the questions from members after we hear from Mr. Streicker for 10 minutes.

**Mr. John Streicker (As an Individual):** Thank you.

To those of you on the committee who are new to the Yukon,

[*Translation*]

welcome.

[*English*]

To those of you who are returning, welcome back. I know your stay here will be very short, but I hope it is productive.

I would like to begin by acknowledging that we're on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

My name is John Streicker, and I'm speaking to you as a Yukoner and a Canadian citizen. By way of introduction, I'm the past president of the Green Party of Canada. I've run twice here in federal elections in the Yukon, representing the Green Party of Canada. I recently served a term as a Whitehorse city councillor alongside Kirk Cameron, who you heard from just a moment ago. Currently I'm nominated as the Liberal candidate for the upcoming territorial election. I was also one of the first members of Fair Vote Yukon when it began.

I'm sharing this background with you, but I'm not here to represent any particular partisan point of view. I'm here first and foremost, as I said, as a citizen of Canada and the Yukon.

I would like to thank you for the important and, I would say, critical work you are undertaking to consider the issue of electoral reform. Thank you as well for coming north of 60 to the Yukon today but also to the NWT and Nunavut coming up. As northerners, we really appreciate that you take an interest in our perspectives.

An opportunity to shape and improve Canada's voting system does not come around very often. Therefore, I would also like to acknowledge the significance of the makeup of your committee. I note that it is not a reflection of the seats in Parliament. Rather, it is in some way a reflection of the popular vote from the last federal election. I know it is not precisely proportional, but it is not lost on those of us who take an interest that the committee's composition nods to the idea of proportionality.

I suspect that you take your collective role as a committee seriously, and that is only right. I would indeed hope that you do not rest on the fact that you have proportionality in your composition. I encourage you to go further: to think, deliberate, and represent, and ultimately to propose, beyond the normal constraints of your partisan stripes—of all of our partisan stripes. Designing a strong electoral system for Canada deserves that you think as Canadian MPs first and as partisan MPs much further down the road.

I believe strongly in the democratic process, warts and all. As such, I firmly believe that the design of our electoral system should come blended from the diverse views of all Canadians. We don't always agree, but when we respectfully share that diversity, I think we have stronger outcomes.

When I referenced a strong electoral system for Canada, I used the word “strong” and not the word “best”. It’s very specific. I don’t believe any voting system can accommodate all issues and concerns. I do think our current electoral system can and should be improved. How do we make sure our system is fair, straightforward, and inclusive? How do we use the system to capture the intention of the voters as well as possible?

● (1545)

In recent decades, our world has grown, shrunk, and become more diverse. I think this is reflected in how people vote. We vote for a party and a leader, we vote on a range of issues, and we still vote for the local person. This is the single clearest reason, in my opinion, to move to proportional representation.

I do not believe proportional representation solves everything. There will still be strategic voting, but not as much. There will still be vote-splitting, but not as much. I think proportional representation is most important because it will encourage people to vote for what they believe in. I can’t stress how important I believe this to be. It is important both because it will generate more voting and more engagement—I think we will have more people voting—and because it will create a closer representation of the intention of voters.

Having said that I believe in a grassroots process to generate Canada’s system and that I personally support proportionality, I now come to the main reason I am here to speak to you today.

By the way, I heard the earlier presentations. I recognize that I will be repeating some things that were said, but emphasis is good.

As a riding, the Yukon has only about one third the number of citizens that the average Canadian riding has. Northwest Territories has slightly more, and Nunavut has slightly less—I think it may be the smallest riding by citizenry in the country. I would have to check on P.E.I. to be sure.

On the other hand, the three northern territories make up 40% of Canada’s land mass. Representation takes on a whole new meaning when communities are so far apart. You could ask Larry or your other colleagues from NWT and Nunavut, and they will tell you that in the north we think of ourselves as communities. We will talk about the Yukon, but really, how we interconnect is as communities. You have to imagine how hard it is to talk to your citizens over that kind of distance.

One of the things that we share and in some ways appreciate, as northerners, is that we are far away from Ottawa. This brings me to my main point. No matter what system you ultimately propose, please do not lose local representation for the north.

I will just state for the record that it is my understanding of the Constitution, although I am guessing you are all aware, that we have one MP per territory, according to the Constitution Act of 1975, for here and NWT, and the Nunavut Act of 1993. Further, the number of MPs for a province or territory shall not be less than the number of senatorial seats, and we also have one senator from each of the territories. Yet it could be possible, under some proportional systems, that a non-local person could be chosen to represent some ridings. At all costs, I urge you to design and recommend Canada’s electoral system so that this is not the case here. This would go hard against

the growth and development of the territories, the history of us. I believe it would also contradict the spirit and intent of our land claims and self-government agreements.

It is avoidable. There are many ways to achieve proportionality or near proportionality while still maintaining local representation for those ridings that strongly identify as stand-alone. I look over to Mr. Cullen; his riding might also think in this way.

In all likelihood, the preferred solution will be a made-in-Canada blended approach. Maybe it will utilize suggestions put forth by Jean-Pierre Kingsley, or maybe it will be based on the system proposed by Dave Brekke, Yukon’s own electoral reform advocate.

For a moment, I will just try to give you the example of here. If we used Dave’s PRP system here, we would see that there are many ridings.... For example, just across the bridge here, we have Riverdale North and Riverdale South, but really, they think of themselves as Riverdale. You could have two representatives from there: one chosen by first past the post or preferential ballot, and another chosen as a proportional representative from that local list. I listened to your questions earlier, and I don’t believe you have to sacrifice local representation for proportionality.

We also have one riding in the far north of the Yukon called Vuntut Gwitchin, and we would never want that riding to lose its identity.

● (1550)

I will close out my remarks to the committee. I’m happy to discuss through questions the potential details of a blended made-in-Canada system. My main points are for a system derived from Canadian citizens, with proportionality, while maintaining local representation, for distinct distant ridings.

When Minister Monsef facilitated an electoral reform discussion in this very room one month ago, she affectionately called us all democracy geeks. I will think of you that way affectionately as well. I’m happy to wear that moniker because, as she put it, democracy can’t be taken for granted.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We’ll go now to Ms. Romanado for five minutes.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Thank you so much.

Thank you to our two presenters for being here today.

As I mentioned in the previous panel, I too would like to acknowledge that we are meeting on the official territory of the Ta’an Kwäch’än Council and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. I’d like to thank the citizens of the Yukon who are here today for coming out. I know that not everyone is a democracy geek, as you’d like to call us, so thank you for being here.

Mr. Brekke, we don’t have a copy of your submission because it hasn’t been translated, so I don’t have in front of me the exact information. I may ask you some questions that would be answered in the document.

In your PRP model, it's essentially a mixed member proportional where the local candidate, the local MP, is elected using a preferential ballot, and then there is a list candidate. I want to make sure I understand....

They're not a list candidate?

• (1555)

**Mr. David Brekke:** No. All the candidates who are elected come from being candidates in the election.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Okay. Let's take my riding and a neighbouring riding as an example. You squish them together and it's a new riding, right? We have an election. We have an MP elected. Between the other candidates that ran for election in the super riding, the two together, we would then choose somebody from there who would be the proportional candidate MP. Is that correct?

**Mr. David Brekke:** Yes. We first of all get an idea of what parties should be represented, how much, and we take away a percentage from the seats that they have already won, because those votes are represented.

We're trying to give representation to votes. The winner of a riding seat would be the candidate from that party who received the best reception in the election.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** So we keep the first past the post, and then we take.... For that one, the one who got the best representation, he or she gets elected, and then the other candidates—

**Mr. David Brekke:** No, but they aren't elected by first past by the post. They're elected preferentially—

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Preferential, sorry.

**Mr. David Brekke:** —and actually a Condorcet preferential. To give an example, with five candidates you get a point for every time you are chosen ahead of another candidate. A first-choice ballot would be worth four points, because they came ahead of four people. The second would be three; the third, two; the fourth, one; and the fifth one would be zero. That could affect the way people vote. People could vote for their first choice.

The votes are of equal value. If you look at this vote, with five members, the vote is worth 10 points, which is four plus three plus two plus one. If a person were to vote just first choice, and many people like to do that, then that's four out of 10 points gone. There are six points left to split among the other four candidates. If they pick first and last, then there would be only three, and they get two points each instead of one and a half.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** I get how you pick the constituency MP. My question is more about the other MP, who came from the list of the other candidates who ran. Is it possible that the candidate who ends up getting selected is the one that people didn't vote for?

I'm just curious, because not picking someone usually means it's because you don't want them to represent you. You might end up still with somebody as your list MP, as I call them, that you didn't want. Is that correct?

**Mr. David Brekke:** It's not a list. They win their seat by the election. Say there are between two—

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** It's the person who's runner-up, basically? Is that what this is?

**Mr. David Brekke:** No, not necessarily. The proportional seats represent the electoral area. Every riding in that electoral area has some voting results, and it's taken from there on a percentage basis how the candidate from that party did, and how that other candidate from that other party over there did, but the party wins the seat, and the candidate with the most votes or the best representation wins the seat, and they win it with the help of all the other candidates of their same party. To me, it also gives meaning to people who don't win the election.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Thank you for the clarity. I wanted to see the difference between a regular proportional or a mixed member proportional and your system.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Thank you very much, Ms. Romanado.

We'll go to Mr. Reid, please.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Brekke, am I correct in saying that it is candidates who came from the ridings who would wind up getting onto the proportional or regional seats?

• (1600)

**Mr. David Brekke:** Yes.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Is this similar to another system that's being discussed? Obviously, in addition to people who've developed systems *de novo*, we've also had witnesses before us talking about existing systems and how they function. One system brought to our attention is the one used in the German land or province of Baden-Württemberg, in which, as I understand it—I don't want to leave the impression I'm a Baden-Württemberg electoral system expert—they also have a system where those who lose individual seats, sort of the top losers, those with the highest percentage of the vote and not elected, are the ones who get selected and brought in. Is that essentially what we're talking about here?

**Mr. David Brekke:** Well, it's not necessarily the second one in the riding; it's the party that wins the proportional seat.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** The party then has either an open list or a closed list, or some kind of list.

**Mr. David Brekke:** No, the party has candidates in all of the ridings they were running in, and they didn't get elected to the preferential seat. So they are eligible for this seat. And it's the candidate that did the best in their riding.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Right. Isn't that what I just said?

**Mr. David Brekke:** Well, I didn't get that.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** All right. We might be in violent agreement here. Okay.

**Mr. David Brekke:** But they weren't necessarily the second candidate is what I'm saying, if they're from a different party.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Right. Okay.

Essentially there are regions. You used the Ottawa area as an example. By happy coincidence, I am an Ottawa Valley member of Parliament, so I'm pretty close to that area. An obvious question arises: how did you choose the size of the regions, and is the size of the regions critical to the model? That is to say, could they be larger or smaller and still produce the same kind of effect?

**Mr. David Brekke:** Yes. This was done when we were just getting going on this. We did 2006 and 2008 for Canada, and to do it, we just took cities with four or more ridings, as well as P.E.I., which has four. I think Ottawa has one or two, or...

**Mr. Scott Reid:** At the time it had eight seats, so it probably would lend itself to being divisible by four with ease.

**Mr. David Brekke:** If it has eight now, that would be simple. It works. There are either two, three, four, or five ridings, and the same number of proportional seats. So you'd have four seats, six seats, eight seats, ten seats.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Okay. So is there any reason in principle why you could not, say, in a city like Toronto, which obviously is a good deal larger—and I don't think neighbourhood-to-neighbourhood variation is more substantial than it is in other urban areas—go with a large number of seats, say 12 or more? Would there be any reason not to choose that?

**Mr. David Brekke:** We're trying to keep a connection to voters as much as we can, so we set the maximum at four. I'm sure it could be done with any number, but I don't think it's that valuable. I think we can put up to 10 in an area, and they will have more connection than if there were 20 or 30 or whatever.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** There's a fundamental tension between the goal of having local representation—whatever failings it has, first past the post does have one riding and one person in the smallest geographical size that's possible given the way in which people are spread across the country—and proportionality. Pure PR, one giant list for an entire country, gets the best proportionality but the worst geography.

We heard from witnesses from Ireland, where they have an STV system. Ireland started off with ridings that typically had a larger number of MPs, but gradually the number of MPs has been coming down because the parties that dominate the political system have an advantage. When there's a three-member district, which is the minimum number allowed per riding under their constitution, they get less proportional results.

You can see what I'm getting at here. Four seems like a number unlikely to produce highly proportional results. Am I wrong in my concern that a riding of that size would have that problem?

•(1605)

**Mr. David Brekke:** You're talking about a region?

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Yes.

**Mr. David Brekke:** I like to see regions small. To me, Toronto would be too big a region. We split Toronto up into various sized ridings.

I encourage you to explore the website, where you can get all the data on this. It was Ted Dean who really did most of the work; I was helping him.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Thank you.

I know I'm out of time, but you've been very helpful. Once the translation of your document is done, we will be looking at it with great interest.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll go to Mr. Boulerice.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** Thank you, gentlemen. I'm going to speak in French.

As I told the previous group of witnesses, I'm extremely glad to be in Whitehorse, Yukon, for the first time ever.

Many thanks to the witnesses for being here. Thanks to those who've taken the time to come and watch the committee's proceedings. Some of them have been here for quite a while already and are continuing to watch. I want to thank them for their patience and interest.

My question is for Mr. Streicker.

Let's assume we are adopting the Kingsley position, whereby there are different systems depending on the region, province or subregion. What system would you prefer to see in place for the country's other semi-rural, urban, or suburban areas, once it was confirmed that Yukon and the Northwest Territories would retain their MP? Would you like a list system, as in the Netherlands or Germany, or would you prefer multi-member ridings, as in Ireland? Mr. Reid just talked about that.

**Mr. John Streicker:** Thank you for the question.

I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to answer in English.

[*English*]

I'm not as big a fan of lists. I actually like Dave's system, to a point.

Let me say one thing to begin with. If we have a system that's adopted, and the Yukon remains not...either first past the post or preferential, or whatever the base level is, it does not mean.... I heard Mr. Cameron's response, and I want to emphasize it. The Yukon would still participate, or can still participate, in the proportionality side of the question, especially if it is national proportionality.

Mr. Brekke's proposal is not really national proportionality, it's these subregions of proportionality. He's choosing a small granular size of about four, but as Mr. Reid points out, it could be much larger. You could use your electoral boundary commission to try to choose what regions form. I think he has very smartly chosen that you don't need to rejig the rest of the boundaries, right? You just use natural boundaries as they pre-exist.

In terms of the list, my favourite is to use local representation. Mr. Brekke and I sat down to discuss the system and to talk it out ahead of today in a couple of meetings. One of the things that I would prefer is that.... The way it works in his system is within that region, you would use proportionality and you would grab the highest vote for those parties of people who are not elected. It's great as long as... and the reason he keeps the number small is that you still get the local.

But you could have local; for example, you could come up with or you could choose to say—I'm the son of two math teachers, so bear with me for a second—that we'll do pairs of ridings, or threes, or whatever. Just combine the ridings, as he suggests, wherever it makes sense. Keep them standalone wherever it makes sense, because the Yukon is its own thing, or elsewhere. Then you could say, all right; proportionality, we'll ask for that vote, and we will maintain proportionality across the country while maximizing the local vote in each riding. There are a lot of combinations at that point, but the math can figure it out. What that would mean is that you would take the highest vote.

Now, some parties with a lower percentage of the overall vote would get picked, and they wouldn't have a high representation necessarily within those ridings, but you would get the higher numbers of those people. You would still have local representation.

I don't like the list system. So if you're asking me to compare the two, I would take Ireland.

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** How much time do I have left?

**The Chair:** You have 25 seconds left.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice:** To ensure greater proportionality in Canada's north, in addition to the three members for Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut, would it be conceivable to have a fourth member to help ensure election results reflected greater proportionality? The member would be a sort of super MP for the north.

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

[*English*]

**Mr. John Streicker:** Right. I've discussed this with Mr. Cameron and I've discussed this with Mr. Brekke. Honestly, I don't believe you are looking to grow the size of Parliament. I would be very happy, but you need to understand that it is not the "north", it is the "norths". It is plural. It's different. We have a sorority with each other, but it's not the same.

That proportional person is challenged in that they would be trying to travel...and if you talk to Larry about his travel, then you will understand that it is very difficult.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Monsieur Ste-Marie.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Good afternoon, gentlemen. Thank you for coming to meet with us today.

I'd like to start with a few comments for Mr. Streicker.

First, thank you for reminding us that the three northern territories, "the norths", as you call them, cover 40% of Canada's land mass. That's something. We've certainly noted your desire to include proportionality in the reformed voting system while retaining local representation, particularly for "the norths".

I have a question for you, Mr. Brekke. The model you are proposing wouldn't apply to the northern territories. Is that right?

[*English*]

**Mr. David Brekke:** It would apply all over Canada. I didn't get to this part, but perhaps I could say it now. For proposed additional seats, only three additional proportional seats would be required for the preferential ridings proportional system to provide proportional representation in all provinces and territories in Canada. However, my proposal is to give those additional seats to an area that is already overrepresented population-wise but very under-represented when geographical area is concerned. We would have three—

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** I have to interrupt you.

[*English*]

**Mr. David Brekke:** —proportional seats in the north.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** What about the three additional seats for the Northwest Territories? It doesn't involve giving a seat to Yukon, a seat to the Northwest Territories, and one to Nunavut but, rather, three seats for the entire north. That is what your model proposes, is it not?

[*English*]

**Mr. David Brekke:** Yes, for the whole north. My concern is to have as many parties as we can representing the north.

I'm not afraid of the three Liberal members here, but you never know what could happen in elections in the north. I think it's good to have both government and opposition.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** As one of my colleagues pointed out, one of the big questions around the model you are proposing has to do with the size of the regions where this form of proportionality would apply. You gave the example of the large Ottawa region, which would have six ridings. Those ridings would be reduced to three, and three other members would be chosen to represent the region. The number six is a model. Then, you talked about Toronto, which would be split in two. I'm not very familiar with Toronto, but I believe we are talking about 20 or so members in each of the regions. That way, a candidate who obtained 5% of the votes could be elected.

The rest of Canada has many rural regions, so there wouldn't be a standard model where each region had six members. I'd like to hear you comment on that.

•(1615)

[English]

**Mr. David Brekke:** I'm not sure of the question here. Basically what I'm proposing is that we would have four, six, eight, or ten in an electoral area. I call them electoral areas. We have to put them together so they are adjacent and so on.

In the Yukon, we had ten ridings in Whitehorse: four in the north, four in the south, and Vuntut Gwitchin was left as it is—just preferential voting.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** I have another question for you.

Why opt for preferential voting over proportional voting? Under preferential voting, if I vote for the Green Party candidate, they get five points, and my second choice gets four points, according to the examples you gave earlier. Five versus four isn't much of a difference.

People in other cities told us that preferential voting was a good system when voting for a president or party leader because they were the one who would be establishing the consensus, but that preferential voting didn't allow for adequate representation of diversity in terms of parties or ideas.

Why not just vote for one member and then have three members from the region make up the difference between the seats and the votes received? It wouldn't be based solely on the first choices.

[English]

**Mr. David Brekke:** It's just that, to me, sometimes there are second-place candidates, or even third-place candidates, or fourth-place candidates, as far as first-choice votes go, who could be the most wanted or accepted candidate in that riding.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** I would just like to point out that such a system doesn't favour representation of third parties but, rather, large parties of the centre.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Ms. May, over to you.

[English]

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** I am going to pursue asking some questions, and I am going to try to get to two topic areas in the five minutes that we have. I want to ask whether you would pick up on the proposal Kirk Cameron made about dedicated first nations seats, indigenous peoples seats. I want to come back to that.

I want to thank both of you for being here, and all the people in the audience, here in Whitehorse.

I am fascinated by your proposal, Mr. Brekke. I am excited about your system, but I am wondering if we can make some tweaks to it. First, let me just summarize by saying we have had one witness before us who talked about the Condorcet preferential system. It was Professor Eric Maskin from Harvard, and I like the way you have thought of using that for half the seats and PR for the other half.

Do you think you could wrap your head around the idea that the seats for PR, in your system of cutting the number of ridings in half,

keeping the number of MPs the same, and doubling ridings as opposed to bigger clusters...? I'm following you so far. But could the second MP, who wasn't elected by a preferential Condorcet ballot, reflect the national proportional vote and still be taken from that cluster that makes them both local? If the NDP are short a few seats, we could even tweak it more and say that we are going to look for an NDP woman in that seat, or we are going to look for a Green Party indigenous person. We are going to use that second runner-up spot for not the person who actually came second in the riding but meeting proportional requirements across the country.

Is that a possible tweak to your idea, or would it violate some of the principles you were using as you put this together?

**Mr. David Brekke:** I don't think so, but the voting for the proportional seats is also preferential.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Right, but at the end of the day, you have a cluster of people who ran and didn't win that seat on that method, and you have a national vote that could potentially still be a false majority, for instance, as the worst-case scenario under our current voting system. To correct for that, we could use your model and tweak it a bit.

I am always looking at this made-in-Canada blended solution. I have to say that I am extraordinarily impressed by how many new ways there are to look at this. We think we have heard everything and then we hear from someone in Joliette who says, "I have an idea", and we come to Whitehorse and have a completely new idea, so thank you. But I'll shut up about it.

Can we play with your system a bit?

•(1620)

**Mr. David Brekke:** Oh, I think so. I hope you will find the ideas in there helpful. I think they're very representative in terms of the effectiveness of the vote. When we did Canada, we did 138 ridings in 19 electoral areas, and they came out very well. I don't have the numbers before me, I am sorry to say, but it went from around 50% to around 80% to 90%. If you had people who voted with their second or third choices for the riding candidate, they would have elected someone too. I just want to see votes count.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** I am going to turn to John Streicker on this one. I like your phrase that there will be "ridings that strongly identify as stand-alone". We know that there will be a resistance—as was manifested in the Ontario referendum on mixed member proportional—to the idea of enlarging the size of Parliament, but we just added 30 seats in the last round. It seems to me that where you can't cluster ridings because of geography and culture and identity, a small fillip of three to five additional MPs in a House of 338 will not meet much public resistance, particularly where they have been added for purposes of proportionality, giving northerners a bigger voice and potentially, again, meeting the requirement that every Canadian should feel there is an effectiveness to their vote. If, God bless you, you're a perennial Yukon Green Party voter, you would eventually feel that you had made a difference, because it would affect the proportionality of the national allocation, and you might even end up with a Green Party northerner—or an NDP northerner; not that we would forget Audrey McLaughlin.

I turn to you, John. What do you think of adding a few seats to give the north more of a voice?

**Mr. John Streicker:** Well, I am biased. I mean, sure, I would love that. I am just trying to be a little practical with the committee. I do think that Canada has a strong identity with the north. I think that Canadians could even see that this is necessary, but I want to be careful sitting here trying to ask for just us; do you know what I mean?

I will flip it back to the question you started with, where you were talking about whether we could use the system to help more readily reflect the diversity of our country. That is a challenging question. Do you try to push it to get that or do you try to encourage it to get that, and—

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. John Streicker:** Okay. I will leave it there, but yes, I think about those things a lot.

**The Chair:** Mr. DeCoursey, please.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** John, I'll let you finish your thought in a moment.

I just want to clarify this in my own mind, so that I can reinterpret it for others when I try to explain your model, Mr. Brekke. In first past the post, the popular vote is easy to understand, as it's reflected through the percentage of Xs on a ballot. The Condorcet model takes vote share as a percentage of the points earned, as a share of the totality of points available, to determine what the popular vote is.

Is that the clearest way to articulate that?

**Mr. David Brekke:** Yes.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** Wow. Every once in a while I get it right. Thank you so much. It's a real neat and innovative system to reflect upon, and something new to me as delivered as part of today's conversation.

Mr. Streicker, go ahead and finish your thought.

**Mr. John Streicker:** I do think that there is a choice we face here, whether or not to push or pull a system where we seek a diversity in our decision-making bodies that reflects the diversity within our communities. I do think it's incredibly important that we get more female representation, more first nation representation; well, I'll use the word indigenous, because in the north it's not all first nation. You will figure that out as you go across the north.

I don't know; part of this question, for me, comes back to the Senate. We had an idea about what the Senate was supposed to do, and clearly things are afoot with the Senate. I don't know where it's going to land. I don't know what you will eventually choose for Canada. As soon as we start to open up those questions I get nervous, because then you could change some things around, such as the number of seats in the north.

I'll come back to this point about the extra seats. Just ahead of this meeting, Dave and I met, and we sat down to discuss the system. He said he was going to put a pitch in for one more proportional seat per territory, and I said "Good luck", not because I don't wish him good luck, but because I think you would have a challenging time proposing that. I think if you came to a system that was more or less there but had, as its one need, a few extra ridings for the north, you might get away with it.

But wherever you draw the line, the north isn't defined by the 60th parallel. That's the territorial definition, but that's not northerners' definition. I would not go to Old Crow and say that I live in the north. I'd be very careful there. It's a relative definition. So it's a very hard line. I would defer to Mr. Cullen as well, who has to deal with this issue.

Because of that, it's challenging to add those seats. I can appreciate that three is a modest number given that we just added 30, but I would be worried if we opened a can of worms.

• (1625)

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** Mr. Chair, do I have any time left?

**The Chair:** You have just over a minute.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** Thank you.

You spoke about the importance of the role of this committee. Just to paraphrase, you effectively told us not to rest on our laurels, to work hard, and to deliver something.

This is one step in a process of presenting an electoral reform option to Canadians. How do you feel we are best positioned to help, in whatever way we can, legitimize some level of reform for Canadians, given that this has to go to Parliament and needs to be validated in a certain way?

**Mr. John Streicker:** It also needs the endorsement of Canadians. Look at what happened with Brexit. That is a country divided at the moment. Whatever system you put forward, you're going to have to find some way to check with citizens about whether this feels right or not. I don't know whether that's a formal referendum or not. I'm not trying to propose one way or the other. I do think you need test some system.

The challenge will be that if you get down to three or four different systems, and one of them maintains the local representation for ridings like the Yukon—I don't want to just say the Yukon, but "like" the Yukon—and then you put that into the mix and put it out there, it could easily lose against those other ones.

The thing I'm asking you not to rest on your laurels about, or not to be overly partisan on, is to watch that when you get down to those choices, you've done your best to try to maintain that local representation in all of the systems you propose.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Mr. Deltell, you may go ahead.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Gentlemen, welcome. I'm very pleased to talk to you.

First of all, Mr. Streicker, I want to pay you all my respects. As you said, you're here as a non-partisan citizen, but you have been a member and the president of your party. Congratulations. It's important to have people work hard for democracy and for what they believe is good for the future of this country; even if we disagree on 90% of the issues, it's quite interesting to see you. I pay all my respects to Madam May too.

I have one quick question. You recognize, and I appreciate your frankness, that the actual system is not perfect and that what you propose is not perfect either. So why do we want to change something non-perfect with something non-perfect?

**Mr. John Streicker:** It is my sincere hope and belief that there is better. It has to do with this concept that when the first-past-the-post system was created in a two-party system, more or less, in a place where it would take you a month to get from this riding to Ottawa or more, and through several means of transportation that would take you outside of the country before you got back, people voted locally. They really did. It was a local decision. The news came late about the First World War to the Yukon. It took time. The thinking, the culture, was very local.

Now we have created a culture where we are connected not just as Canadians but globally. As we do that, people are becoming disenfranchised, because they don't believe the overall representation in Parliament reflects the overall vote. For better or worse, people have begun to identify that "popular vote" means something. That is why I think an adjustment to the system...

I'm not opposed to first past the post in many ways. It's simple. It's immediate. You can see it happen. There are aspects of it that I think are good, and I'm not trying, necessarily, to throw those out. For example, in Mr. Brekke's system, you could take it and say—not that he would necessarily like that—that we'll use first past the post within that first seat, and then we'll use a second vote on a party system, maybe preferential. I don't know, but it's possible to have a blend. When I say a blended system, I believe first past the post is definitely a part of that.

• (1630)

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** But you have to recognize also that overall, since the beginning of the 1920s, when we had more than two parties in Canada, we had 29 elections. Of those 29 elections, in 28 of them the party that received the most votes formed the government, except one time, in 1979, with the Joe Clark government. The Honourable Erik Nielsen was a minister at that time. I want to pay my respects to this Yukoner.

**Mr. John Streicker:** Well, I'll just say, sure, why don't we use first past the post; if we're going to use a referendum, then let's use first past the post and say proportional or not. Give it a straight call and give it 50 plus one, and then okay.

It's not that I'm opposed to it when we're in binary choices. I understand our history. I recognize the challenges you face as a committee to make a proposal back to Parliament, which then goes and makes its own decision, which has to yet go and check with the citizens. It is a difficult process. The reason I'm encouraging you is that I am here to speak to you, and you have a significant role.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** It's quite interesting to have all the reasons and all the propositions on the table.

Mr. Brekke, I have a quick question.

[Translation]

I was left disappointed during your initial presentation. In your example, you said there would've been three riding members: one Liberal and two Conservatives. As for the three other seats, I didn't catch what the final outcome would have been.

From your experience, if we were to apply your system to the 2008 example in the Ottawa region, what would the final outcome have been? How many Liberal, Conservative, and NDP members would there have been?

[English]

**Mr. David Brekke:** There would have been two Conservatives, one Green, two Liberals, and one NDP.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Well, okay. One Green with 8%, and 39% Conservative only two ridings. You call that equity?

**Mr. David Brekke:** Yes. How many unrepresented votes did those other parties have?

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Can you explain why having 39% represented by two members is fair compared with having one member with 8%?

**Mr. David Brekke:** Sorry, run that by me again, please.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** According to your system, the Green member gets 8% of the votes, and the party is entitled to one member. The Conservatives get 39%, in other words, five times more, but are entitled to just two members. You see that as a fair system?

[English]

**Mr. David Brekke:** That's two out of six. Yes, I think they're fairly well represented by comparison—

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Is it fair to have one member for 8% and two members for 39%? That sounds fair to you?

**Mr. David Brekke:** One member for 8%: yes, that's the last seat. Those are the last seats that go. But—

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** I totally disagree with you, sir.

**Mr. David Brekke:** Do you think that 6% unrepresented votes is worth more than 8% unrepresented votes? That's....

I don't understand the question. I'm sorry.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** I think I don't understand your explanation.

**Mr. David Brekke:** Maybe we could meeting later or something.

**The Chair:** We'll see if Ms. Sahota can get some clarity on this.

Ms. Sahota, it's your turn now.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Hello, Mr. Brekke. It's so nice to see you here today.

Mr. Brekke visited me in my riding of Brampton North not too long ago, and we had a good conversation about his proposal for electoral reform.

I'd like to congratulate you on winning the silver medal in the Canada 55+ Games. Yukon did very well; it sent about 98 participants to the city of Brampton for the Canada 55+ Games. They won 63 medals—28 gold, 25 silver, and 10 bronze, so the territory did quite well. I'd like to congratulate you and the territory of Yukon for doing so well in the games and for representing yourselves so well.

Mr. Brekke, we've heard so many proposals since the day the two of us met that things are starting to almost blur a little. I find your proposal quite fascinating. I have liked all the proposals that have been more innovative and that have really shown a bit of thinking outside of the box and thinking about Canada's specific unique needs. I appreciate your effort in that.

There's one thing I need clarification on. I understand the assigning of the point system and how that correlates with the full percentage and the two separate portions of the ballot, on one of which you would be ranking the party and on the other of which you would be ranking the party candidates. However, you were saying that for the proportionality vote, it would be somebody who did well as a candidate, a runner-up or somebody—

• (1635)

**Mr. David Brekke:** They would be the candidate from their party who did the best in their riding.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** In order to figure out the percentage, to determine how well they did, would you be looking at the party votes? I don't understand why we need the two sides of the ballot if you're just looking at how well they did amongst the other candidates.

**Mr. David Brekke:** Well, that's when the seat is decided, but to see how the party is seen in the area, the preferential vote would be... and we would try to match seats to the proportional vote.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Okay. So for the proportional vote, you would look at how well the party votes did in that region, in that area.

**Mr. David Brekke:** Yes, in that area.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Let's say the NDP did second-best after all the ridings were won, I guess.

**Mr. David Brekke:** Well, after the ridings are won—

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** The constituency ridings or whatever you want to call them were won, and let's say the next highest percentage was to the NDP. Would you then look at how the NDP candidate ranked within the...?

**Mr. David Brekke:** Yes. It's the popular vote that determines whether the party wins a seat. Then we look at who's going to fill it. It's not from a list; it's from the—

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** You mean the popular vote from within that region, not from across the country.

**Mr. David Brekke:** I mean within that region. Actually, they come very close.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** They usually are the same?

**Mr. David Brekke:** Yes. In 2008 it seemed like the Greens had roughly 6% of the vote, and they had roughly 6% of representatives. Out of 138 ridings, the Greens would have won nine.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Okay. So say the NDP does the second-best on the party side of it, but the candidates are fifth. Does that usually happen with this system?

**Mr. David Brekke:** What I'm trying to do is give meaning to people's votes. First of all, we have the riding seats, so every time a riding seat is won, we've got some votes for that party represented, so we just subtract whatever they have in seats and votes.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** You subtract theirs and then you keep the remainder.

**Mr. David Brekke:** Yes. What we're trying to do is give meaning to everybody's vote, so it's the party with the most unrepresented votes that wins like the last seat; there's at least one that is only partially represented.

• (1640)

**The Chair:** I think it will become clear when you see the document, because I have it in front of me, and it is a bit clearer.

We'll have to go to Mr. Cullen now, please.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** We'll "have" to go to Mr. Cullen? It's not the warmest introduction I've ever had, Chair.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** But I'll get my five minutes, I guess.

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Unfortunately.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Yes, unfortunately we'll go to Mr. Cullen now.

Mr. Brekke, I very much appreciated one of the last comments you made. I think it's not the first time you said you were attempting to give meaning to people's votes. It will be worth looking at, I think; that goes for both of our panellists today.

An Elections Manitoba study came out looking at their last provincial election and asking non-voters why they didn't vote. One of the leading reasons was that they didn't feel like their vote would make any difference. Asked if they had a proportional system in which votes were tallied in another way, where their votes did mean something, half of the non-voters polled said they would vote.

Yukon celebrates enormous voter turnout compared with the rest of the country. You should be celebrated for your love of democracy, both at the territorial and federal levels. I'm looking at ways to make each vote make a difference, and you've given us another innovative model, which I very much appreciate.

I wanted to turn to Mr. Streicker for a moment. In the sense of what the voter sees, this is important. We often take it from the perspective of how Parliament's going to look, what it means for the parties running, and how the votes are tallied, but what do the voters see as the result in governance? Better policy, more balanced opinion? What is it that you believe is at the heart of why we need to move to the proportionality and away from the current system that we have?

**Mr. John Streicker:** Here in the north we have incredible access to our politicians.

This is Larry.

Hi, Larry.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. John Streicker:** I'd bet you, if you asked these people behind us, most of them would know him as Larry.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I've heard other names.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. John Streicker:** I think that ability to be able to connect with your political representatives is one of the things that you would get with a more proportional system, because as Mr. Brekke notes, if you can see your vote having an effect, you will then identify with that person. The challenge will be if the person who's representing the vote that you cast is somewhere very far away. You won't have that feeling.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Right. I saw the leader of the official opposition, Liz Hanson, who joined us here today—you folks are on the edge of an election—and she is “Liz”.

**Mr. John Streicker:** Exactly.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Even saying her full name there felt a bit odd.

I'm just looking at your last election: 40% cast a vote for their current government, and they achieved just shy of 60% of the seats in Yukon.

In terms of policies, be they policies around climate change and pricing carbon, fracking, or indigenous affairs, is the notion that, at a national level, removing that distortion, where 39% or 40% gets you 58% of the seats and 100% of the power, will start to include real action on some of the issues? That's what I'm trying to drive at. We've seen governments run campaigns promising something, achieve that 39%, and then start running their government on a whole bunch of other different things because there's no natural tension anymore; it's just within the party, within the Prime Minister's Office.

**Mr. John Streicker:** Right. It moves out of Parliament and into the cabinet, PMO, or wherever it moves to, but it's not in Parliament.

I am a fan of respecting diversity of views. As Mr. Deltell noted, his views may not align with mine. That's okay, in my opinion. There is a competing argument about this. I think we are stronger when we respect our diversity—that means the diversity of our political views as well—but I recognize that it will mean more challenges to reach decisions. I just happen to think that those decisions are stronger when you go through that effort.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** But I wonder if that isn't actually, in and of itself, a Canadian value.

**Mr. John Streicker:** It is.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** If I think of Whitehorse, or if I think of Carcross, Atlin, and these small communities, if you simply said, “We're having it our way: you're from one political group in town, and no matter what else, this is the way it's going to be”, you wouldn't last long in those towns. So is the Canadian value not that level of compromise, even though some attempts—

**Mr. John Streicker:** Sure.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I have one quick question, Mr. Brekke. Here's the challenge we're going to have around complexity once we get into that math. You've spent time with it, so to you it seems very clear. How can we overcome the resistance people are going to have to the counting part of your system, when they say, “Boy, the math seems overwhelming; I don't understand how that person became an MP”? That attachment is very important to Canadians; they want to be able to see transparently how we're putting people forward to Parliament.

• (1645)

**Mr. David Brekke:** I wish I knew.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. David Brekke:** I invite you all to take a look at the white paper. It will give you an idea of what I'm trying to do.

I think what you are doing now is really helping to increase knowledge and understanding. One of my main concerns is expressed in a video on my website, entitled “Do you want your vote to count?” It's done superbly well, I think.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I gave you a little bit of extra time, Mr. Cullen, to make up for hurt feelings.

Mr. Kelly.

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

John—I understand we're all on a first-name basis here in Whitehorse—you spoke of the imperative of having the buy-in of the broad Canadian public, no matter what system may be chosen or recommended by this committee or by the government when it receives this committee's recommendations. You mentioned the possibility of a referendum, although you hedged somewhat and pointed out, in your allusion to the recent referendum in the U.K., concern over narrow margins dictating large-scale change, if that's where your concern was.

How do you think the current government should go about obtaining the broad buy-in, when one considers how long and how entrenched the current voting system is? Some would say that Canada has done fairly well as a country under first-past-the-post voting. It's a pretty good country. We've done very well. I think most of us are enormously proud of the achievements of our country. If we are, as you well put it, to go into some kind of change from an imperfect system to another imperfect system, knowing that there is no perfect system, what would it take to know or be confident that a change is a legitimate change that has the support of all Canadians?

**Mr. John Streicker:** That's a very good question. I would also say that as Canadians, even when we are faced with imperfect systems, we always strive to improve. I think of that as another Canadian value. At some point we got universal health care. I remember hearing my mother talk about the fights as that came in, but now I see it as rather well endorsed by most Canadians. That example tells me that it doesn't mean that if something has always been, thus it shall always be.

To come more directly to your question, Pat—Mr. Kelly—

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Pat is fine.

**Mr. John Streicker:** I feel like I should give you guys the respect you deserve, because this is a great thing you're doing, and let me acknowledge that. I'm not trying to be disrespectful to your positions here.

I don't know if I have a clear answer on the way in which we should test the Canadian public. I feel our partisan differences coming out around this question. It is part of the challenge. I hope you make that recommendation, as you do...if you are to propose a system. Who knows? You may end up with a bunch of minority reports because you may not, as a committee, be able to reach a consensus.

What I would like to suggest, though, is that as you consider how that testing of the Canadian public goes, if it is a referendum—and that may be the best place to go—I hope you do it in a way that is not trying to prejudice which way you want it to go. That's to any of you; I'm not trying to talk to you specifically, but to you as a committee. I hope you don't have a sense of, “ Oh, I want it to go this way, so let's do it like this”. I really hope that the essence of how you pose that question is to test Canadians' will generally.

With regard to Brexit, you're right, it was the narrow vote, but it was also whether or not people were fairly informed about the system. Mr. Cullen asked Mr. Brekke—when Nathan asked Dave—about how we help people to learn these systems. They're not that complex. They're different. Canadians are smarter than that. We're multi-faceted. We can figure this stuff out. One practice round and we'll be away.

As we enter into this system, I hope that the public is well informed, because when you don't have a well-informed public, then you do not have the foundation of a democracy.

• (1650)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Aldag.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Great. Thank you.

**Mr. David Brekke:** I'd like to respond to that question.

**The Chair:** Maybe Mr. Aldag will give you some time to respond to that.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Sure; feel free to respond.

**The Chair:** Thanks for taking the hint, Mr. Aldag.

**Mr. David Brekke:** I'd like to encourage you to keep going for the referendum after the people have experienced a system. Then I think they are ready to decide this or that. Right now, before they'd even used it once, and I think they need to use it twice, because that's the motivation of their performance in their.... I'm sorry, I'm stuck for words.

While you're serving, I think you politicians look at what you have to do to get elected again. If you are looking at an electoral system like this PRP, I think you will be looking at collaboration, and showing collaboration, and functioning the way people would like to see their government function.

**The Chair:** Mr. Aldag.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Thanks.

Mr. Brekke, I'll continue with you. I'm a first-time member of Parliament. As I came into the committee structure, I sometimes thought, you know, it's a pretty rigid process, and it doesn't really allow us to get into all of the details and conversations we need in order to share things around. I think today may be one of those victims of this structure in that we're not getting enough time to fully understand. Ms. Sahota had explained to me that she'd met with you, and you had this brilliant system, and we were looking forward to coming to Whitehorse. I think the time constraints have simply limited our ability to dig into it.

I have a couple of quick questions on your system. I haven't seen the brief. I'm sure you can answer my questions quickly and easily to help me understand.

For the number of candidates that would be run in each riding, if you take two existing ridings and collapse them, in the most simple term, would each party be running one person, or could they run two or more?

**Mr. David Brekke:** One. Each party runs one candidate. It's just like a present riding, but—

**Mr. John Streicker:** Two.

**Mr. David Brekke:** No, not in my system.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. John Aldag:** So it would be one.

On the proportionality, going back to Mr. Deltell's example, if one party gets 60% and some party gets 5%, to make it proportional, does the 60% get the two...? Or I guess it's just the one seat. Where does the second one come in?

**Mr. David Brekke:** In terms of where the second one comes in, when we pair those ridings, we have one riding representative that we are electing and one proportional representative for the electoral area.

• (1655)

**Mr. John Aldag:** Right; which you mentioned. Okay.

I've done a number of town halls on this. One of the messages I keep getting from my constituents is that whatever we do, make it simple and understandable.

**Mr. David Brekke:** Yes.

**Mr. John Aldag:** On the simplicity side of things, do you feel that yours meets that test of simplicity? Is it still simple to mark the ballot, and the complexity comes in when Elections Canada counts the ballot? Or would the voters actually have to understand the behind-the-scenes complexity, so that, if they're going to vote strategically or do other things, they actually know how the various points are being broken down—i.e., they rate first and last versus all five? Where is the simplicity in the system?

**Mr. David Brekke:** It's giving equal value to votes. Voters can vote whatever way they want. They're giving a number for every candidate, but they don't have to give a choice for all candidates.

**Mr. John Aldag:** On the voting side of things, it would meet that test of simplicity.

**Mr. David Brekke:** I think on the voting side, instead of putting an X, you rank your candidates one, two, three, four, five, six or whatever.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Call it a day, go home, turn on the TV, and wait for the results.

**Mr. David Brekke:** Yes.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Some of the systems we've heard about will address some different issues. We've been told that various forms of proportional representation may increase women's participation, or under-representation of other groups, such as visible minorities or aboriginal and indigenous populations. It's not always by a huge amount. Sometimes it's by one or two percentage points.

Does this system deal with those types of member issues?

**Mr. David Brekke:** No, it doesn't. It's just dealing with voting members, but if votes start to count—we're already seeing a lot more women involved now—I think it will be better.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Okay. If you've done any analysis, do you get a sense of whether this would lead to the continuation of majority governments, or—

**Mr. David Brekke:** No, we'd do away with majority governments.

**Mr. John Aldag:** It would be minority coalition governments, so that would be a decision—

**Mr. David Brekke:** I don't even like coalition governments, because the coalition then has to vote together. It's just like a majority government, to me. What I'd like to see is that we end with a minority government. Everybody is represented. I know that I would, like most people, rather go to someone I elected than someone I didn't elect, which happens now for half the people.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

This has been a very interesting discussion. I think we all really appreciated the informality of it. I think we can call it that. There was a lot of room for a back-and-forth.

Mr. Brekke, we all appreciated the mental math exercises you gave us, or at least I did.

Mr. Streicker, we appreciated your passion for democratic diversity, your obvious love of democracy and of this country, and your passion for unity through diversity.

Thank you so much for contributing to this discussion. It's all recorded. The analysts are taking notes, and I wouldn't be surprised if we see some quotes from this session in the report at some point.

Thank you very much. We'll suspend for a couple of minutes before we go to our open-mike session with members of the community who are gathered here this afternoon, but again, thank you. We appreciate your interest in making this country's electoral system better.

**Mr. David Brekke:** I'd like to thank all of you for hearing us out. We really appreciate it.

**The Chair:** The meeting is suspended for a couple of minutes.

● (1655)

(Pause)

● (1705)

**The Chair:** We'll proceed to the open-mike section of the meeting.

I'll just explain a little context. As you know, this whole exercise and this committee exists because there was a commitment in the last election campaign on the part of the governing party to look at reforming the electoral system. A committee was created to go across the country to take testimony and take testimony in Ottawa from experts and stakeholders. That's why we're here today.

The open-mike format is an important means of allowing us to gain feedback from citizens everywhere we travel about what they think of the present system and how they might like it to change. The format for this section is that each person will get two minutes at the mike. I always say to the audience, look, don't worry, give it to us straight. We don't need any preambles to soften the blow. We can handle it.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** The more direct and hard-hitting you can be, the better.

We'll start with Mr. Duane Andrew Aucoin. Perhaps Mr. Jimmy Burisenko would take the other mike. After Mr. Aucoin is done, Mr. Burisenko can speak. We'll keep going like that.

Go ahead, Mr. Aucoin, for two minutes, please.

**Mr. Duane Aucoin (As an Individual):** [*Witness speaks in native language*]. It's good to see all of you. I'd like to thank the Ta'an Kwäch'an, whose land we're on today. I thank all of you who are here.

I just wanted to say, as a member of Teslin Tlingit Council, that I'm not speaking on behalf of Teslin Tlingit Council. I'm speaking as a citizen. We're a self-governing first nation. We're one of the first peoples who were here. We were here before the Yukon. We were here before there was a Canada. We had our own system of governance. We had our own system of democracy. Let's not forget the original governments that were here before. My dad's people emigrated here from France in 1640. Before all the Europe people came here, there were governments that were here before.

In my community we consist of five clans. All of the clans are equal, no matter how large or small the clans are, and we operate by consensus. It's a more difficult way of governance. It's a slower way of governance at times, but it's a better way of governance because everyone's voice has to be heard. It's not compromise. I don't like to use the word "compromise". It's collaboration that exists between the five clans for us to come to a common agreement on what's best for our people. It's not just for my clan when I'm sitting there, and it's not the other representatives who are there representing their clans, but it's what's best for us all.

Whatever system you choose, please put away the partisan politics and ask what's best for Canada.

I just got back from Ottawa and I think I'm sick. I brought back a sickness from there—or it's an allergic reaction to partisan politics.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Duane Aucoin:** As one of the first peoples of this land, I would give you one piece of advice: please put something forward that's best for everyone and best for the people.

*Gunalchéesh. Merci.* Thank you.

**The Chair:** That's an eloquent statement reminding us of the history of this country, and how there are different methods of making decisions at the governing level.

Would Ms. Linda Marie Leon come to mike number one, and then we'll ask Burisenko to speak for two minutes, please.

Mr. Burisenko, go ahead.

**Mr. Jimmy Burisenko (As an Individual):** Hello, and thank you very much for hearing me.

I want to thank our government too for responding to the call by so many Canadians on the need for electoral reform. So many Canadians have come to see that there's a tremendous problem with the system that we're presently using, the first-past-the-post system.

That is precisely the way I see it. I think I speak for quite a few Canadians that the false majority it creates, when we concentrate power to parties on a minority of votes and give them total power, really brings into question the democratic character of our political institutions. When we grant this total power to a party on a minority of votes, it makes election promises seem to fall by the wayside and the will of the people seems to get ignored. Parties can too often run away with their own agendas. I think this is a problem that so many people see.

Another problem that compounds it is that an effective opposition is very essential, and that seems to be thrown out the window. I think that leads to the framework wherein our parliamentary systems have become so rancorous and argumentative. I think it's precisely because of that problem. One party has all the power, and they don't have to compromise anymore. Opposition parties that are actually representing a majority of the electorate in our multi-party system are ignored and a party can run away with their own agendas. I think this is a big problem that so many Canadians have come to see.

When we grant parties a system where the percentage of the seats represents the percentage of popular vote that they attained, then they have representation. Yes, we're human beings and we get argumentative and whatnot, but when parties see that they have a goal, an agenda, a means of accomplishing a goal, it leads to co-operation. That's a very important thing. Even if a party only has 8% or something like that, then they have some influence on the outcome, albeit kind of small, but they do have some means of affecting policy. I think this has been proven in systems that use proportional representation, that they do produce more policy in the end.

**The Chair:** Thank you—

**Mr. Jimmy Burisenko:** I'd like to give you quick examples of that. In Scotland and New Zealand, the last couple of countries that went to proportional representative systems, there were reports done.

• (1710)

**The Chair:** Mr. Burisenko, we're out of time. But you made your point.

**Mr. Jimmy Burisenko:** We're out of time already? Oh, that's too quick.

**The Chair:** Actually, it was almost three minutes.

But I must say that you've made your point about—

**Mr. Jimmy Burisenko:** I just want to say that our democracy is a very precious inheritance and it's very hard won. When we see the problem with it, it's our duty to do something about it. I hope that's what's happening here.

The time for change is now, folks. Thank you.

I have more to say, but [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I should mention that you can also go to the committee website. There's an electronic questionnaire, a very good one. You can also submit written comments as long as they fall within the 3,000-word limit. So there are many other ways to participate.

I would ask Mr. Drischler to come to mike number two.

Ms. Leon, please give us your viewpoint.

**Ms. Linda Leon (As an Individual):** Hello.

I'd just like to say that I'm strongly in favour of electoral reform. I don't know how that's going to work. I'm believing that we may have to go to the Swiss system, where we have different systems for different regions, because we are a complex and very big country.

Mostly I want to address the issue of a referendum. Slightly more than 68% of electors in the last election voted for parties that had electoral reform as part of their platform. It is legitimate, and to say otherwise is disingenuous. For the problem with a referendum, we only have to see the example of Brexit where fearmongering and lying made people vote against their own best interests.

The only time I'd ever want to see a first-past-the-post system in place is where it's a yes-or-no situation. I'd like to congratulate Dave Brekke for suggesting that the referendum happen after we've tried it.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Could Mr. Yuuri Daiku come to mike number one?

Mr. Drischler, it's your turn.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. William Drischler (As an Individual):** Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

[English]

Very briefly, I would like to speak to the desirability of proportional representation. Globally, democracy has a real problem. Voting participation is falling nearly everywhere, yet we've seen in the last two German provincial elections that voter participation has gone up more than 10%. This is very impressive. There is a new national populist party that's claiming all the credit. This is extremely dramatic proof that proportional representation has great potential for democratizing, and I hope the committee will keep this in mind.

Second, I'd like to address the specific problem of Yukon in proportional representation we've discussed today. I would like to suggest that the number of seats in Parliament from the Yukon is a red herring. It would be anti-democratic for a population this low to have much more influence than those who live in a riding in southern Ontario with 100,000 voters, but that doesn't mean proportional representation isn't very important to the Yukon. It is.

With proportional representation, overall quality of federal legislation should skyrocket, because it will mean enhanced participation that will improve policy nationally. The general animation of democracy should bring special benefits to the Yukon—for example, greater sensitivity to first nations concerns. A lot of economists have said, when they're discussing growth, that a rising tide floats all boats. That may or may not be true, but when it comes to democracy, more democracy solves problems across the board. That's why I would like to see a proportional representation system adopted.

Thank you.

•(1715)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I'll call Ms. Corliss Rae Burke to mike number two.

Mr. Daiku, it's your turn.

**Mr. Yuuri Daiku (As an Individual):** Thank you very much.

I'll follow your suggestion to keep it brief: no Internet voting, and I'll tell you why. Data are routed outside of the country. We have already a situation right now where privacy and security of data are not guaranteed. It's not simple. It's not immediate. It's not transparent. It's open to all sorts of fraud, attack, and even denial of service.

So whatever you decide, since I only have two minutes today to tell you, please leave this out. Go back to the very simple, immediate, human side of solving problems. Somebody can't get to the voting booth? Pay for a taxi. Don't pay for expensive machines; pay for a taxi. Somebody needs a mail-in vote? Create a system where you have a mail-in vote with two envelopes. The inner one is confidential, and the outer one gets a return card to say it has been received. There are simple solutions, one by one.

No Internet, please. I know this because I too have been following what we heard today and I work in IT. I know what I'm talking about.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Gordon Wayne Gilgan, please take mike number one.

Ms. Burke, it's your turn.

**Ms. Corliss Burke (As an Individual):** Thank you to the members of the committee for taking the time and putting in the effort and energy that you are putting into this process. I know it's exhausting, and it's probably one of the most important things that we as Canadians will address.

I also will keep my comments very general instead of addressing any particular model. I have lived in quite a few jurisdictions in Canada, and I've voted in every municipal, provincial, territorial, and federal election since I've been of voting age. I'm concerned that in the first-past-the-post system of voting, my vote has not counted. It has not counted because the governments formed have often been false majority governments. The number of seats elected in majority government often far exceeds the proportion of the popular vote. The parties I've voted for have rarely been in the majority, and have been under-represented in Parliament.

We can see in the campaign that's going on in the United States right now how destructive it is to have only two parties who exchange control of the government every few years.

I would like to have a voting system that would give every voter and every vote an equal voice in our Parliament. I believe that the proportional representation system would provide the voice that I want. A party that receives 5% of the votes in the country should have 5% of the seats in Parliament. A party that receives 40% of the vote should never have a majority of the seats. Please recommend to Parliament that Canada adopt a proportional representation system of voting.

Also, I am not in favour of having a referendum on this issue. There was a referendum last October, in essence, when over 60% of Canadian voters supported the Liberals, NDP, or Greens, all of whom had electoral reform as a key component of their platform.

Thank you for coming to Whitehorse to hear our concerns, and thank you very much for this opportunity to participate in our democratic process.

•(1720)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Charles Stuart Clark can go to mike number two, and we will give mike number one over to Mr. Gilgan for two minutes, please.

**Mr. Gordon Gilgan (As an Individual):** Thank you for the opportunity to present my views on electoral reform.

I voted in every election since I reached voting age, and that is many years ago now. I voted in federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal elections, because I learned from my parents that democracy was important and needed my support. Over the years, a lot of my votes didn't count. The governments were formed by parties that did not have a majority of votes, but often had a majority of the seats. Many of these governments were not very effective, because their view was often very narrow.

In the last federal election, I voted strategically. I voted for a party I did not support in order to get rid of a party that was destroying our country. I did not like strategic voting. I would prefer to know that my vote would give me a voice in Parliament, no matter how small that voice was.

I support proportional representation. I believe it will enable every voter in Canada to have a voice in Parliament. The diversity of Canada will be better represented when every voice is heard. Proportional representation will also present an opportunity for issues to be raised and properly debated in federal elections, instead of phoney issues such as wearing a niqab or which party spends the most of the taxpayers' money.

I urge the committee to keep the promise that three out of the four parties made in the last election: that 2015 would be the last of the first-past-the-post elections. I recognize your task is a difficult one, but I ask each member of the committee to set aside the party's interests and support a system of proportional representation that will allow all Canadians to cast votes that count.

Thank you for your attention.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Ms. Mary Ann Lewis can come to mike number one, and now Mr. Charles Stuart Clark can share his views with us.

Go ahead, sir.

**Mr. Charles Clark (As an Individual):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I really want to say to all of you around the table that I can only imagine how gruelling this whole process is, but I also want to say how extremely important it is.

I spent the largest piece of my working life in various developing countries and saw the struggles of governance in those countries. I always thought our system was bulletproof, until I started to see what was happening in some of the European countries. I realized that the strength and credibility of liberal democratic systems is really very much in question in many parts of the world, not here—yet—but I think it is extremely important that we address the question of citizens' participation and, as a part of that, citizens' sense of agency. Many young people I spoke to prior to the last federal election said, "Oh, I am not going to vote; it doesn't make any difference." We have a real challenge to convince those people that their vote does make a difference.

For that reason, I put emphasis on two of the five values you identified: first, proportional representation, so that there is a sense of citizen agency; and second, local representation, so that we know who at least one of our voices is. Putting these two things together I think adds up to a multi-member proportional system, of which there are clearly many variations. I encourage you to look carefully at that

and to offer real hope that we will have a wider citizen participation in the future.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Would Mr. Robert Lewis like to come up to mike number two?

Ms. Mary Ann Lewis now has the floor.

**Ms. Mary Ann Lewis (As an Individual):** I'd like to begin by thanking you for coming. I don't ever remember a group of federal politicians from various parties, including all parties, coming, sitting, talking, being willing to listen, and then to go away and work together to come up with an answer to problems that people are having and that people have expressed. I think it's a first, and it's wonderful.

I'd also like you to take back a thank you to Maryam Monsef, who was here in this very room with a large group of people. She used great skill, she spent a lot of time with individuals, she was non-political, and she encouraged us to learn more about how the voting system works and the ways that we could affect it. She was wonderful and very warm. People warmed up to her, learned, and carried on. We have carried on talking since, and trying to learn. The actual learning falls a little short, which you will hear when I'm explaining what I would like.

I would like first past the post changed. I would like some type of proportional representation. I am not sure what will work best—you have greater minds than I do—but I would like you to work on it together and to come out with a solution that would allow most people to be represented.

As to the referendum, we absolutely don't need one. Why put the money, the effort, the time into that? We had a referendum at the election, and we all voted to give Justin Trudeau a majority government. Some people ran to the Liberals, other people ran away from something else, but together we gave Justin Trudeau a majority so that he could act. We would like you to go back with that majority and work together to come up with a solution that works for all Canadians.

Changing the voting system creates greater choice for more Canadians, creates greater options towards a better quality of life for all, ultimately our children and grandchildren. Why are we doing this? It's because we care. We love Canada, we love our families, we love our children, and we want them to have a future that's safe, that's productive, and that gives them a life they can value.

• (1725)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Ms. Mary Ann Lewis:** I just want to say that for that to carry on, you need to deal with climate change, because that will sabotage. I would like a group like this to look at that, please.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Sarah Wright, please come up to mike one.

Mr. Robert Lewis, please go ahead.

**Mr. Robert Lewis (As an Individual):** Thank you.

I'm not going to be as long as Mary Ann. We have very similar values.

If you leave here with one thought, it's this: please get rid of first past the post. We need proportional representation. In the Yukon, where we're only electing one member, I think that person should be elected by at least 50%-plus of the electorate, even if it means having a runoff election.

Most people need to feel that their member has been elected by a majority. We're looking for strong leadership, so we're looking at you folks. We don't want a referendum on this. We want you to evaluate everything you hear across the country and come out with the best system for Canada.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Jean-François Des Lauriers, please come to mike two.

Ms. Wright, go ahead, please.

**Ms. Sarah Wright (As an Individual):** Thank you.

I am a member of the Fair Vote Yukon group with Dave Brekke and a handful of other people. We've been working hard to get you guys here. Thanks for coming.

You were asking us how to engage the Canadian people in this process. It's though education. We have had two democracy salons in this territory in the past trying to get educated about the options.

I was in Parliament last week as well. I saw Larry, and I was on a plane with Duane when he was coming back. I heard leaders in my country still questioning whether first past the post is good or not. I heard a gentlemen here say that it's been here for 140 years, and it's worked; it's good. I haven't had the vote, as a woman, for 140 years. It's been good for white guys, but it hasn't been good for the rest of us, okay? Let's just get that out there. Let's educate ourselves. This is an opportunity for us to evolve as a country, and it involves education.

This piece of paper is not education. Most people would look at this piece of paper and go, "What?" We need a more interactive multimedia approach to this particular silo that you are in. We need to have creative, web-interactive, YouTube-friendly films showing. Use Lego. Do something to engage us in workshops to try these different systems out. Let's hear from other people in other countries. At one of our salons, we had a woman from Switzerland, who lives here now. She described the voting system in Switzerland. Let's learn. It's been done in other places. Canadians don't need a dumbed-

down electoral system. We are intelligent. We know what we're doing.

The last thing—

• (1730)

**The Chair:** One more point, please.

**Ms. Sarah Wright:** We need to work together, because it's about consensus. Our Parliament has to represent everybody, not just the guys who got one vote more.

**The Chair:** Thanks so much.

Monsieur Des Lauriers.

**Mr. Jean-François Des Lauriers (As an Individual):** Could I get a signal when I have thirty seconds left?

**The Chair:** Yes. I'll put my hand up.

**Mr. Jean-François Des Lauriers:** First of all, thank you very much to the committee for coming to Yukon.

I'm all for proportional representation, and I'm sure that in the end we will get a system that reflects the values of Canada and will be fairer than first past the post, but proportional representation is not a panacea.

I'll look at two different countries, Germany and Guatemala. Germany has proportional representation and they have a very strong democracy. Guatemala has proportional representation with a very good formula. They have national lists and they have representatives of different ridings. But if you look at those two, Germany has a strong democracy and Guatemala is a basket case. The big difference between the two is that Germany is quite an egalitarian country, whereas Guatemala is really a plutocracy. One big difference between these two is that Germany has public funding of political parties, like we had here in Canada for a very short time. It is the best element to equalize the playing field.

Now I'd like to address some of the comments that were made earlier in terms of the pan-northern aspect of proportional representation. I was the vice-president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada for the north for fifteen years representing Yukon, NWT, and Nunavut. I travelled those three territories. I also had to be in Ottawa on a monthly basis. I know the north, and I know that there are differences between the three territories, but I think they're not insurmountable. Keeping the three representatives we have now and having one person to represent the north as a whole is not a bad idea.

**The Chair:** Mr. Price and Mr. Clark, would you advance to the mikes, please.

Go ahead, Mr. Price.

**Mr. Richard Price (As an Individual):** Good afternoon.

My name is Richard Price. I'm a professor of native studies at the University of Alberta. I've been living here for about four years.

I support proportional representation because I think it's a better system for our democracy than the current system. I think proportional representation overcomes the problems of first past the post. We often have a government elected with 35% to 40% of the vote, and this ruling party often has many more members elected than that percentage. If this ruling party governs as the Harper government did, seemingly only concerned to appeal to their own base of voters, this leaves the rest of us feeling very left out of the political process and any chance to influence new policies. This situation creates anger and resentment, and even, I would say, disillusionment.

I believe proportional representation develops a feeling among citizens to be more included in the political process. It overcomes the sense of not being adequately represented in Parliament, especially for those of us who tend to vote for smaller parties on the left, such as the NDP or the Greens.

In addition, under a new proportional system, more chance will be given to a person to vote for the party they believe has the best leadership and policies rather than compromising by voting strategically for the person most likely to get elected.

I had some experience observing the process of electoral reform in New Zealand while I was there on sabbatical in 1992, and in subsequent research visits. As you know, in 1992 and 1993 they had two referendums and they voted to change their system of election. Then they moved away from the first past the post to mixed member proportional.

Subsequently, in 2011, 57% of New Zealanders affirmed their support for this new system. In 2012 the electoral commission recommended even further important changes.

Thus, I believe that the New Zealand experience has been positive, and as we search for improvements in Canada, we could well learn from the experience of another member of the Commonwealth.

Thank you very much for this opportunity.

• (1735)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. Clark, and finally Ms. Astrid Sidaway-Wolf.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. François Clark (As an Individual):** May I address you in French?

**The Chair:** Absolutely.

**Mr. François Clark:** Thank you.

The first-past-the-post system has been in place in Canada for quite some time, and now we want a change. We want to adopt a proportional or mixed member proportional representation system.

People are afraid of change, generally speaking. That's to be expected given that change represents the unknown. We are used to the current system, which elects majority or minority governments. In the case of a majority government, the system works well. But in the case of a minority government, a coalition, it doesn't work so well.

As a teacher, I've been to Quebec City, Victoria, and Ottawa with my students. I'm sorry to say this, but when we look at the way MPs work in Parliament, it becomes clear that you aren't the best role models.

Our Prime Minister, who was also a teacher, almost surely never told his students that, when working together, they should work against one another and not listen to what the other person has to say. No way. As teachers and parents, we tell our students and children to work together in the spirit of co-operation and not against one another because that gets us nowhere. Conversely, by working together, we would get farther than we are now.

The politics we practice—and it's worse in the United States; we won't get into that—do nothing to advance Canada's political movement or Canadians' ideas. Given the statistics cited by other speakers, I think that, if we opt for a system that supports mutual assistance and adopt a proportional system, we will begin to think differently, in the hope that members will work together. They won't have a choice if they actually want the country to make progress.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Clark.

Finally, we have Ms. Sidaway-Wolf.

[*English*]

Go ahead, please.

**Ms. Astrid Sidaway-Wolf (As an Individual):** Thank you. Hi there.

Thank you for being here today. I'm a new resident of the Yukon, so it's very exciting to part in a local engagement process.

I'm a teacher, and I'm nervous speaking in front of you, which is weird. I haven't had stage fright in a while. I teach students aged five to 18. I'm a social studies specialist. One of my goals is to engage students in every way as young as possible and as frequently as possible.

In high school, I actually was pretty sure I was going to be prime minister, but I eventually decided to be a teacher so that I could make a difference. Hopefully, I will be proven incomplete in my perspective and this will be a great example of making a difference at a higher level.

I've been pestering my friends, annoyingly, to vote since our first election when we could vote. I have been met with endless disillusion and apathy, as it feels like our voices are minimized or outright ignored. I know that's not necessarily the intent, but it certainly feels that way. Once I got a driver's licence I offered to drive people to the polls, but people would just be like, "Well...I don't know."

The hope of electoral reform gives the opportunity for a revitalization of public engagement. I know that my friends and students are suddenly animated about the idea that our votes mean something. It's not just exciting; I believe it's the only way we can continue along the path of promises I make every day to my students, and our Prime Minister has made to us, that the voices of all Canadians matter.

Thank you very much.

• (1740)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

This has been a really been a great public input session. Everyone was so eloquent, thoughtful, and respectful of the time constraints. It just reinforces the view of all the members of the committee that this is a very great and special place, the Yukon. We're certainly enjoying our time here.

We're going to have a little break here. The members of the committee are going to have about a 45-minute break.

We have one more panel and then another open-mike session. Then tomorrow we're off to Victoria. We're going to continue on our travels talking to people about electoral reform and its wonders.

Thank you for coming out.

Members of the committee, we'll see you in a bit.

• (1740)

(Pause)

• (1830)

**The Chair:** Could the members and witnesses please take their seats? We'll open the meeting and get going.

We have now our third panel of the day. We have three witnesses. They will be presenting for 10 minutes each.

We have with us Shelby Maunder, executive director of BYTE-Empowering Youth Society. Appearing as an individual, we have Mr. John Kenneth McKinnon, formerly a senior adviser on electoral reform to the Yukon government. From the Yukon Federal New Democratic Party Riding Association, we have Madame Éline Michaud, a former colleague of mine and of a couple of members here on the committee.

It's nice to see you again, Madame Michaud. I didn't realize you were working and living up here. It's wonderful. I can see the attraction of wanting to live in the Yukon. It seems like a fabulous place.

We'll get going with Ms. Maunder, please, for 10 minutes.

**Ms. Shelby Maunder (Executive Director, BYTE- Empowering Youth Society):** My name is Shelby. I'm here on behalf of BYTE-Empowering Youth Society.

For those of you who are visiting the Yukon, BYTE is a by-youth, for-youth organization that has been invested in Yukon youth for nearly 20 years. Through our work, we aim to empower youth, have youth voices heard, and help youth create change in their communities.

We do this in a couple of different ways, one of which is through a campaign called Yukon Youth Want. We talk to youth in the Yukon about their vision for Yukon's future, and we typically do this around campaign time. We post those photos to our social media to try to show politicians what youth are thinking.

I was invited here today to speak a little bit about youth engagement. After several years of conducting this campaign, we know that the notion that youth are apathetic towards political and

civic engagement is a myth. We see this every day in our territory, and there have also been some formal studies that prove this as well. I'm not sure if you guys have read the Samara Canada study, but it found that rates of formal political engagement among youth in Canada are actually much higher than among their older counterparts. The report also looks at other forms of civic engagement such as activism and volunteering for charities. Some of those participation rates among youth are much higher as well.

That leads me into a question many of you are asking: if youth are so engaged, why don't they vote? Probably nothing I'm going to say today will come as a big surprise, but I think there's a vicious circle of youth not voting because politicians don't speak to them, and politicians not speaking to them because they don't turn out to vote.

Turnout for youth contacted by political leaders was 15% higher than for youth who weren't contacted, so parties and candidates really have a direct line to improving the youth voter turnout. As well, youth are more likely to vote if it's easy—if they have the required documents, know when and where to cast the ballot, and can get there easily. It can be difficult for a lot of youth to prove their address, especially if they are in university or college or since they are moving around nearly yearly. In some cases polls might not even be accessible. I heard of a community that didn't have a polling station in their town, and people were expected to drive to a place an hour away to cast their ballot. A lot of youth are not going to be able to do that.

That brings me to the topic of electoral reform. I strongly believe in lowering the voting age. Young people pay taxes, and they are affected every day by the policies we're engaged in. In our territory, they are politically and physically engaged. They form social justice clubs at their schools. They raise money for issues that are important to them. As well, there's that study that proves they are engaged.

Additionally, voting is a habit. If we teach them to vote when they are in high school and there are fewer barriers since they have a permanent address and they have the school and their caregivers who are able to help them, we might be able to form their habits at a younger age and then increase their voter turnout as they move forward.

Another thing I would like to add is that youth voter turnout goes up when youth believe there's a big issue at stake and when they believe that every vote counts. I think we're all here today because we know the first-past-the-post system does not count every vote equally.

• (1835)

In closing, I would just like to say, as a representative of youth and also as a voter under 30, that as young people we want to be contacted by our politicians outside of election time. Aside from electoral reform, we want voting to be more than a transactional experience. We want to hear from our representatives not only when they want something from us. I think a way to engage youth in bigger voter turnout is to be there the other years of your term.

That's it for me.

**The Chair:** Thank you. It was very clear and to the point.

We'll go now to Mr. McKinnon for 10 minutes, please.

**Mr. John McKinnon (Former Senior Adviser on Electoral Reform, Yukon Government, As an Individual):** Thank you, Mr. Chair, honourable members of the Special Committee on Electoral Reform. As you know, we are meeting on the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dün and Ta'an Kwäch'än first nations.

Thanks for coming to Yukon. Having been engaged over the years in various panels and commissions, there always seems to be one constant: it's just never the right time to visit. Yukoners at this time of year are, of course, busy preparing for the imminent royal visit, which begins tomorrow. Our many political junkies are either with us here tonight or watching the Clinton-Trump debate. Many of our sports fans, of course, are immersed in World Cup hockey. It's getting down to the last chance for Yukoners to get that moose in the freezer. The real burning question for Yukoners is whether they really have enough wood cut to get through the winter. My wife wouldn't come tonight, because she's busy getting those last lowbush cranberries in before the first snow falls. So the crowd you've gathered here tonight shows the interest in electoral reform in the Yukon, considering all these other options available to Yukoners on a night like tonight.

I concluded my report to the Government of Yukon as their senior adviser on electoral reform on February 1, 2005, by expressing my opinion that at some future point in Yukon history, the Yukon public would loudly and clearly let their leaders know that the time had come to examine electoral reform, and suggesting that any such initiative could only be successful with the total involvement of the Yukon government and all the Yukon first nation governments. The report also indicated that Mr. Dave Brekke, a former Yukon federal returning officer, was suggesting organizing and promoting a Yukon citizens for electoral systems change that could possibly herald the beginning of a Yukon first vote movement. I understand that you heard from Mr. Brekke this afternoon. These thoughts from a decade ago have certainly now come to some fruition in the Yukon.

You've also now heard from national and international experts on the some 300 different schemes of proportional representation that have been devised all around the world. The two most popular are the STV and MMP system. You'll be happy to know that I have absolutely no intention of trying to compete with their expertise in front of you tonight.

I would simply hope, not to take too much of your time, to offer some northern and Yukon perspectives that you will have to deal with during your deliberations. I have no problem with the proportional system of electing members to Parliament. I just at

this time see no obvious solution to true proportionality in the large, sparsely populated Canadian ridings.

I have a few Yukon facts that you probably already heard sometime today. The voting population of Canada's three northern territories combined, containing over a third of the land mass of Canada, does not equal the voting population of many of the ridings all across our country. Yukoners elected the second ever woman to sit in Parliament, Martha Louise Black. Yukoners selected the first woman leader of a provincial-territorial party, Hilda Watson. Yukon MP Audrey McLaughlin became the first woman leader of a national political party; 76% of Yukon eligible voters voted in the last federal election, second only to Prince Edward Island at 77.4%; and over 75% of Yukon eligible voters have voted in the last 10 territorial elections. Yukon electoral boundaries commissions over the years have judiciously crafted districts that have sensitively accommodated communities of interest. This has generated high voter turnout that all Yukoners can justifiably take pride in and most other jurisdictions in Canada can only envy.

Let me quickly explain how Yukon's version of electoral reform has been a big part of Yukon's constitutional development over the years. In 1969 the territorial council and the commissioner journeyed to Ottawa to debate the formation of an embryo Yukon cabinet with Prime Minister Trudeau and the Minister of Indian and Northern Development, Jean Chrétien. Negotiations proved successful and the executive committee was formed, comprised of two elected members of council, two assistant commissioners, and the commissioner as chair.

• (1840)

In 1973 the Council of Yukon Indians presented their land claim, "Together Today for Our Children Tomorrow", to the federal government. There remained, however, an impossible and impassable roadblock to responsible government for Yukon. Even though, quote, status Indians had been enfranchised in 1960, no first nation member had ever been elected to the territorial council.

To their credit, the federal government recognized that without sweeping changes to the Yukon Act, in order to create districts that could elect first nation representatives, this was not about to happen in the near future. However, sweeping changes to the Yukon Act finally happened in 1974. The size of council was increased to 12 members, and the commissioner in council was permitted to increase the size of council to up to 20 members. On April 18, 1974, the council gave final reading to the Electoral Boundaries Commission, which, for the first time, asked the commission to take into consideration the demographic makeup of the Yukon in establishing new electoral districts.

The commission ended up recommending 12 districts where, for the first time, at least three of the districts comprised a majority of first nation voters. Boundaries were further adjusted with the Electoral Boundaries Commission report of October 28, 1977, which allocated 16 districts, at least five of which contained a majority of first nations voters.

The election of 1978 was the first held along party lines in the Yukon, the first to be run entirely by the Yukon government, and the first ever to elect first nation representatives from the Old Crow and the Kluane ridings. I've spoken to some of the principals on these commissions. Although all of them would maintain that they were never, of course, requested to gerrymander districts, they were totally cognizant that the progress of Yukon towards responsible government and a settlement of the Yukon land claims were important considerations in their decisions. It has been less than 40 years since the first first nations were elected in Yukon, and it should be recognized that the 1974 and 1978 electoral boundaries decisions forever changed the face of Yukon politics and Yukon elections.

I make these points only to give you some idea of how Yukoners have dealt with important electoral decisions on their own in the past, urging changes to federal legislation and then using the processes finally open to them to dramatically effect major reforms to Yukon government institutions.

In conclusion, I know that you have been looking at hybrid systems to overcome the problems of sparse populations in huge geographic areas in mostly northern ridings. These types of different ridings—some single member, still first past the post, and multiple member constituencies under some form of proportional representation—were rejected out of hand by the British Columbia citizens' assembly. The assembly members were against creating two classes of voters and two classes of members.

If I remember correctly, in the STV referendums in B.C., the northern ridings were the most outspoken against losing their first-past-the-post status, and voted strongly against the STV recommendation. It will be interesting for northern ridings to see how your committee attempts to reconcile this very obvious problem. I'm just not able to get my head around how any true system of proportionality can be fashioned for the huge, sparsely populated areas of our country. I think most would agree that the ranked ballot system is just tinkering around the edges of the first-past-the-post system. I don't think there is a true proportional system that doesn't require, for its practical application, multi-member constituencies. Is this possible in urban ridings? Of course. Is it possible in northern ridings? I just don't see, at this present time, how it can be accomplished.

• (1845)

Thank you for your interest in coming to our busy, beloved Yukon. You have incredibly important, meaningful, and difficult work ahead of you. I just don't think I'd like to be in my friend Larry's shoes on this one.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. McKinnon. Thank you for that historical perspective on Yukon political history.

We'll go now to Ms. Éline Michaud.

Go ahead, Ms. Michaud.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Éline Michaud (Representative, New Democratic Party Yukon federal riding association):** Thank you very much.

It's a pleasure to see many of you again, this evening. Thank you for visiting me in my new home.

[*English*]

Since I am representing the federal NDP here, I will be doing most of my presentation in English, but feel free to ask me questions in whatever language you want. I'll just speak French sometimes.

Like many Canadians and Yukoners, I believe our first-past-the-post system is outdated. Too often it makes people vote against what they don't want rather than vote for what they want. It also seems to fuel voter apathy by making Canadians feel like their vote doesn't count and that their voice isn't being heard with our first-past-the-post system where a bunch of votes are discounted. Of course, many of those Canadians ask why they should go vote if their vote will not be counted. Proportional representation, where every vote makes a difference to the outcome of an election, would make our Canadian democracy stronger.

Proportional representation can take many forms, many of which maintain regional representation, which is important in a country the size of Canada and most certainly very important in the north as well. As a long-time member of the NDP, I'm very proud to be part of a party that believes in constantly striving to make our political system fairer and more representative.

[*Translation*]

Back when I was still an MP and sitting alongside some of you, my colleague Craig Scott put forward an opposition motion in December 2014. It sought immediate and sweeping electoral reforms, calling for the current voting system to be replaced by the mixed member proportional system. Although his proposal wasn't adopted, it did meet with some support.

That shows how hard and how long the NDP has been working on the issue of electoral reform.

• (1850)

[*English*]

The NDP is a firm advocate for electoral reform that makes every voter count. We believe that proportional representation is the best choice for Canada and for Canadians.

This system offers Canadians the chance to truly make their vote count. Instead of a system that only requires a certain threshold of support to be met, whether it's a simple majority or a clear 50%-plus-one majority, proportional representation ensures that political parties with popular support are given a fair share of the seats in Parliament. It is not the case right now. It hasn't been in Canada since the foundation of this country, and it's definitely time for a change.

Proportional representation is a tried and tested voting method. Over 80% of OECD countries use a form of this method, including countries like Germany, Sweden, and New Zealand. Many countries that have proportional representation also have local representation, which is essential in a geographically large country like Canada.

Political parties working in proportional representation systems have learned to do something we all want to do more: work together and find areas of common ground.

[*Translation*]

The current system promotes partisanship. I saw that during my time in Parliament, and, colleagues, you no doubt still experience it on a daily basis. Oftentimes, defending a particular ideology takes precedence, becoming more important than standing up for the interests of Canadians. And yet that is the very thing parliamentarians are elected to do.

[*English*]

By voting for a party and a candidate, Canadians would also get to vote for their preferred local representatives instead of having to choose between local advocates and a political party, which is very often a hard choice to make.

Electoral reform is an important issue also for equality-seeking groups like women in Canada. Nancy Peckford wrote in a 2002 report for the National Association of Women and the Law that Canadian women would be well represented in a proportional representation system. Canadian women have fought for the right to vote and the right to run for office. We're still fighting for equality. Having a structural change in our voting system would give women a better chance of having their voice heard and being represented. Right now women are still under-represented in Parliament. Key decision-makers and elected representatives have not always been responsive to women's demands for political, social, and economic equality.

I would suggest that if there were more women in Parliament, we'd probably already have a national program for affordable day care. But we're still very under-represented, so there's still a lot of work to be done there. It's possible to have lists where you would include more women, so a more representative electoral system would result in greater numbers of women in office. As well, other jurisdictions with a proportional representation electoral model are more co-operative across party lines to achieve equality for women.

Proportional representation is a unifying principle among a variety of voting systems, so many countries require party lists to have equal numbers of men and women presented on the list. This is one kind of structural reform that is needed to promote women's equality. An important first step was done by the federal government by creating a gender-equal cabinet, but there's still a long way to go.

In conclusion, I just wanted to say a few words on ranked ballots, or alternate voting. It's been presented as a system that would be more fair and give Canadians a chance to be heard. But that's only on the surface. Ranked ballots are simply a variation on first past the post ballots, so even though ranked ballots ensure that one candidate needs a 50%-plus-one majority to win, the other 49% of voters are left without a voice in the new Parliament. We're basically very close to the situation that we're decrying right now. That's why ranked ballots, to me, and for the NDP, don't seem to be a solution. They only perpetuate the flaws in the current electoral system that people want to see changed.

With proportional representation, each party receives the same share of voices in a Parliament as the votes that people cast for that party, so it's fair.

Our current first-past-the-post system distorts the outcome of an election by giving false majorities to parties that haven't won the confidence of the majority of voters. This exaggeration of electoral results has created an unfortunate sense of voter apathy. With a vote under proportional representation, every vote counts, because your party vote is tallied whether your chosen candidate wins or not.

Thank you very much for your time.

• (1855)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Michaud.

We will now move on to questions.

As you know, every member has a total of five minutes of speaking time to address the witnesses.

[*English*]

We'll start our round of questioning with each member having five minutes to engage the witnesses. If for some reason you're unable to answer a question because the time has run out, there's an opportunity to do so the next time you have the floor. I wouldn't worry about not being able to get your viewpoint out there.

We'll have Ms. Romanado for five minutes, please.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Thank you very much.

I'd like to thank our three witnesses for coming out this evening. I know you're missing out on some spectacular debate, from what I understand, that's happening south of the border, but I think electoral reform is much more interesting.

I'd also like to thank the members of the public who are here this evening. Thank you for coming out in support of this initiative. I'd like to also acknowledge that we are meeting on the official territory of the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council and the Kwanlin Dün First Nation. We're delighted to be here this evening.

My first question will go to you, Ms. Maunder. You talked a little about the fact that the Samara report indicated that our youth are engaged. I believe they are, and I'm hearing that, in fact, here in the Yukon. There is a huge engagement of voters here. We're delighted to hear about the participation rates. You mentioned lowering the voting age. You didn't mention a number, and I don't know if that meant 16; I'm assuming it's around that age.

We saw a huge increase in the number of youth voting in the last federal election. What are your thoughts on whether this is a one-off or an indicator of things to come? With the increase in engagement, do you feel that if we are to in fact keep engaging with our youth, not just at campaign time, that we might actually see a trend where they're coming back to the fold?

**Ms. Shelby Maunder:** I do feel that in the last election a lot of youths thought there was a lot at stake. When they feel there's a lot at stake, they come out in bigger numbers. I'm not sure if that necessarily indicates a trend, so I'm not sure how to answer that question.

My thinking behind the age of 16 as the voting age is that we're talking to youth. They take a civics course in grade 10, and it can be bit meaningless when they can't put that into practice until after graduation. If they have a chance to vote while they're in high school, and they're engaged in their class, I think there's opportunity to increase the younger voter turnout.

**Mrs. Sherry Romanado:** Thank you. We have heard that from other witnesses as well. As you know, education is under provincial jurisdiction, but I'm sure in our deliberations in terms of the report there might be some recommendations in that regard.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Michaud, it's always a pleasure to see a Longueuil native. I represent Longueuil—Charles-LeMoigne, and I know that you were born in Longueuil. Welcome.

You talked about women in politics. As you know, the voting system isn't the only factor that influences a woman's decision to stand as a candidate. Two questions come into play. Is she going to run and is she going to win? I'm not convinced the voting system influences a woman's decision to run in an election.

The travel burden on members is an issue that has come up repeatedly. It's not easy for a Yukon MP to travel to Ottawa. Work-life balance, the lack of maternity leave, and the lack of child care on Parliament Hill for children under 18 months of age are all barriers that play into a person's decision to stand as a candidate.

Do you, as a former MP, think there are other steps we can take to convince women that they can build a career in politics?

Thank you.

• (1900)

**Ms. Éloise Michaud:** Thank you very much for the question.

You mentioned a number of systemic barriers that prevent women from entering into politics, barriers that we need to address. That's the case at every level of government. In a number of municipalities, if a woman has to go on maternity leave and misses three council

meetings, she loses her seat. Those types of problems persist and certainly impede better female representation in politics.

Some of my colleagues, including Rosane Doré Lefebvre and Anne Minh-Thu Quach, have gotten around certain barriers in the House of Commons by bringing their newborns with them. Christine Moore, who is still a member of the House, lobbied for a nursing room. Steps are being taken to make it easier for women to access a career in politics.

If we were to adopt a mixed member proportional voting system where a vote could be cast for the party, which would produce lists with alternating female-male nominations, that, alone, would lead to better representation by women. Seeing greater female representation, many women would be encouraged to embark on a political career.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

It is now over to Mr. Reid.

[*English*]

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Thank you.

Mr. McKinnon, some of the witnesses we had earlier today were discussing aboriginal representation and made reference to how the New Zealanders have dealt with this through the creation of specifically Maori seats. I'm aware of another jurisdiction, the state of Maine, that has a number of non-voting advisory seats reserved for specific Indian tribes, as they would call them there.

It sounds as if you have tried a different system that perhaps—correct me if I'm wrong—has some parallel with what the Americans have tried to do at the federal level in creating African-American majority congressional districts.

Would that be the closest parallel, or am I wrong in making that parallel?

**Mr. John McKinnon:** I served four terms on the Yukon Legislative Assembly during the really incredibly interesting times, challenging times, trying to find a method of obtaining responsible government and settling the land claim. They were both cut from the same cloth. It was really devolution. It was devolution to the first nations so they could govern their own affairs and devolution to the rest of Yukoners so they could govern their affairs.

Many of us were meeting constantly with the first nation leadership. I was the first elected member of the Yukon Legislative Assembly to sit on the land claim committee. Originally it was bilateral. The first nations said they were only going to have the federal government; that's who they were dealing with. So there was a group of us, young members of the legislature, meeting with the young members of the first nation leadership, saying, "This can't happen. Under the Yukon Act, we have administrative control of all the areas you're interested in—education, health, welfare, game. We have to be at the table." Finally they relented, and we all sat at the table together.

When you saw the intelligence and negotiating capabilities of these young first nation leaders, several of them now Order of Canada members—I'm thinking particularly of David Joe, who was the lead legal adviser for the first nations—you just knew that you didn't have to talk about the Maori system of government any longer and first nations having assured seats. You knew that these people were going to be able and capable of winning seats in their ridings, particularly if they had an edge where they had a slight majority, or like in Old Crow, where they had a heavy majority in a riding.

So we kind of dismissed that idea, because we saw that they could enter through the front door, which has happened in the Yukon Legislative Assembly.

• (1905)

**Mr. Scott Reid:** Did you give us the number of legislators who are aboriginal persons?

**Mr. John McKinnon:** I think this is kind of an aberration, but in this legislative assembly, I believe there are only two members now who are first nations, six members who are women, and 12 of us. I'm not there anymore, but 12 white guys.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** This is one of those times when I think it's appropriate to say that "us" is all of us, regardless of gender and race and all of that stuff that sometimes divides us.

Some of the electoral districts have aboriginal majorities. Have there been first nations members of the legislative assembly who have been elected in districts that have majority non-aboriginal populations? Has that demographic bridge been crossed?

**Mr. John McKinnon:** I'm trying to think; I know there have been members of aboriginal ancestry elected to the city council in Whitehorse.

**Mr. Scott Reid:** If you're having trouble recalling the exact details, that may be a good thing. It's signalling that to some degree the lines are not as sharp as they've been in the past.

**Mr. John McKinnon:** They aren't, because many members who have not been first nation have been elected to the legislative assembly out of where there are majority first nation districts. I'm just trying to think of the vice-versa.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go to Mr. Cullen now, please, for five minutes.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** I represent Skeena, just to the south of here, a very robust and powerful place for first nations people and politics, but perhaps I'll go to the national perspective. I'll start with Mr. McKinnon, and then we'll hear from Ms. Maunder.

You don't seem to have an aversion, Mr. McKinnon, to the idea of some level of proportionality in the federal system in Canada. Is that fair to say? You said something at the end, that you can imagine it for urban ridings—and I imagine suburban may be in that mix—but rural is where the challenge comes: remote, northern, vast ridings as big as the one we're in right now.

**Mr. John McKinnon:** I as a Canadian don't like the idea of a hybrid system. I don't want to see where northern ridings or large or territorial ridings, or perhaps even, knowing the history of P.E.I.... If there were some hybrid system of government in Canada, who

would make the decision of who would be able to keep their first-past-the-post system and who would do proportional?

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** In your statement, you said you could imagine it working in a proportional way at the urban or suburban level.

**Mr. John McKinnon:** Yes.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Your challenge comes when you get up to the....

Do you also have a hard time imagining there being that hybrid in Canada, where we have a model in front of us? The reason I ask that is because we have such a preponderance of weight on the geography in our system right now. As some witnesses have told us, that's the one value that's put in place on the current first-past-the-post system. It's all geography. That's fine in a place like this. Now we're seeing where the needle can move. That's the mandate of this committee, to look at reform and see, between just a purely geographical-type system to one that's proportional, where along the scale we move. We run into challenges when we get out to the remote, the larger, the northern ridings. Yet right now we don't balance votes very well across this country. Of 18 million cast in the last election, nine million went towards actually electing somebody. More than nine million didn't elect anybody. Some voters would say that their views aren't represented when they can't see their vote actually have any impact. In testimony earlier today, one of our witnesses said we need to give meaning to people's votes, significance to their votes.

You mentioned that you believed the ranked ballot was just tinkering around the edges. What did you mean?

• (1910)

**Mr. John McKinnon:** I just don't believe the ranked ballot is a proportional system of representation. I think it's a first-past-the-post system with some tinkering.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Thank you.

Ms. Maunder, I was just looking at the BYTE website here. Obviously the group's not focused on electoral reform with youth engagement. Do you yourself take a position on what kind of system would be preferential, particularly through the lens of the engagement of more young people in Canada being involved?

**Ms. Shelby Maunder:** I wouldn't feel comfortable speaking on behalf of all youth, but personally, I would like to vote in a system where I don't necessarily have to vote strategically. I don't want to vote out of fear for a government I don't want to have, I want to vote for the government that I do want to have.

I do think that the best way for that is the mixed member proportional representation. I think a lot of times turnout can be determined by the type of electoral system that we have, too, and I see that being a way to turn more youth out to the polls.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Sorry, I don't want to complete the sentence for you, but I want to connect it back. You'd see more youth turning out to the polls if they weren't having to vote against something or strategically? Is that the connection between the two?

**Ms. Shelby Maunder:** Yes, I think so. It's also seeing their voice heard. As you said, nine million people who voted in the last election didn't elect the government at all.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** To be clear on that, they didn't elect anyone, opposition or—

**Ms. Shelby Maunder:** Anyone, yes, it's true.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** It's not about electing government alone.

I'm not sure if I have just a bit more time.

**The Chair:** You have thirty seconds.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** This is the statement time, I guess.

I think your most salient point for me sitting on the committee is that engagement moment. If you have a young person where they have the practical application of the vote and that educational moment in a school—which 80%, 90%, 95% of our youth are in at the time of being 16, 17—we know that the patterns continue throughout the rest of life. If they vote at the first opportunity they can, anybody, they will overwhelmingly continue to vote the rest of their lives. If they miss that first moment, they overwhelmingly never vote again.

Thank you for being here. I thank all the presenters.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Monsieur Ste-Marie.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for being here.

Ms. Maunder, you said that, in order to improve voter turnout among youth, it was necessary to reduce the barriers young voters face, such as having to prove their address and finding an accessible polling station. Polling stations could be set up on college and university campuses. I think that's something the committee should consider. If electoral reforms are made, that has to be among the values that factor into the decision-making.

I had been wondering what you thought the minimum voting age should be, but my colleague Ms. Romanado asked you, and it's 16.

I had another question, but you answered that one as well when you told us your age. No, I'm just kidding.

Are you aware of other countries where the voting age is 16?

[English]

**Ms. Shelby Maunder:** No, I don't, actually.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** That's something I was wondering about. I was curious about other countries where that was the voting age and whether the measure was successful. I don't see why it wouldn't work well. If I have time, I'll come back to you.

Now I have a question for Mr. McKinnon about what my colleague Nathan Cullen said.

You said earlier that it would be difficult to achieve true proportionality across Canada's federation, given the vastness of the territories. At the same time, unless I'm mistaken, you said you

weren't in favour of a hybrid system. For example, in a Yukon riding with the current voting method in place, it would be difficult to implement another system such as the compensatory mixed member proportional system. Similarly, in urban centres with a large multi-member regional riding, seats could be distributed proportionally. Is that indeed what you think?

• (1915)

[English]

**Mr. John McKinnon:** Yes. I watched many of the sessions of the B.C. citizens' assembly, and it was the most democratic method of trying to come up with a voting system. There were 161 members chosen, as Mr. Cullen well knows, through that system. The ordinary members of the public were just wonderful in the way they went about their business. The citizens' assembly had 161 members, and when they started talking about a hybrid system in the northern regions, all of these ordinary B.C. folks said, no, they didn't want to see a hybrid system. They said that if they were going to go proportional, they were all going to agree with the proportional system of government. They thought it would be two classes of members if they went with a hybrid system.

When I extrapolate those 161 members to everybody across the country, I think that's probably a pretty good representation of Canadians. Canadians would say that they don't want a hybrid system, that they don't want certain ridings to follow one method of voting while others follow a different method.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** Thank you.

I have the same question for Ms. Maunder and Ms. Michaud.

Ms. Maunder, where do you stand on a hybrid system?

[English]

**Ms. Shelby Maunder:** I'm sorry, I'm not prepared to comment on that one.

[Translation]

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** What about you, Ms. Michaud?

**Ms. Éline Michaud:** Hybrid systems come in various forms. Do we add members to achieve proportionality under the new voting system? Do we create ridings in places where the same system remains in place? In urban ridings, do we introduce a proportional system? It's a complex issue, but one worth considering.

What I am about to say reflects my personal view and not the position of the NDP. I'm not against adding members to achieve proportionality under the new voting system. However, it obviously does give rise to more costs and so forth, so it's an option that requires thorough review.

Again, as I said, this is my personal opinion as a political science graduate. This is an idea I studied when I was in school. I'm not opposed to a hybrid system if it genuinely means that Canadians' voices will be better represented after the election.

**Mr. Gabriel Ste-Marie:** In a nutshell, then, I would add that those are really the issues at play. Voters want a proportional system to close the gap between the number of seats and the number of votes, but, at the same time, they want a direct link with their elected representative. And that's where the challenge lies.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Ste-Marie.

Ms. May, over to you.

[*English*]

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Thank you.

Thank you to the witnesses for being here.

[*Translation*]

Élaine, I'm delighted to see you again. Welcome to our committee.

[*English*]

I wanted to ask the question about how people in the Yukon would react to a system where there were two kinds of voting.

One thing to mention to you, Mr. McKinnon, is that you said you can't imagine a system of proportionality without multiple member ridings. However, there actually is such a system in mixed member proportional. The ridings stay the same. The members are elected through first past the post, or you could tinker with it, and then the proportionality comes from seats that are not attached to a riding. There are issues there, and there are different values attached to different systems, but we could imagine a system without multiple member ridings.

I'm just wondering if you've ever looked at what happened in Manitoba, when they had different voting systems in different parts of the province in response to the different interests of the rural versus more urban parts of Manitoba's electorate. It was some time ago.

**Mr. John McKinnon:** I did look at it some 10 years ago. I don't think I could say that I am current on it.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** Well, no one is current on it, because it was so long ago. We do have experience in Canada with changing our voting systems in different ways. The system that Jean-Pierre Kingsley suggested to the committee would cluster ridings but only in urban areas, and leave alone the areas that are far, northern, and remote.

I can tell you that I have had conversations with some of the people who served on the B.C. citizens' assembly, and they said very forcibly to me that when they went and consulted in northern B.C., northern B.C. residents of more remote, sparsely populated ridings felt very strongly that they wanted their vote to count just as much as that of people in urban clusters. That is why they went the route to full STV recommended in the B.C. citizens' assembly.

This question really matters. What do people in northern Canada want? I put it to the witnesses we had on the first panel, Kirk Cameron, Peter Becker, and Gerald Haase, who want proportionality. They said that as long as proportionality is there nationally, it wouldn't matter to them too much if their system of voting didn't change here in the Yukon.

I would like to ask all three of you the same question. I think I know your answer, Mr. McKinnon. If proportionality was achieved nationally, would it offend you as a Yukon resident and citizen if you didn't see your vote counted differently than it is right now?

• (1920)

**Mr. John McKinnon:** I have looked at Stéphane Dion's system, where the northern territories remain the same, and Jean-Pierre Kingsley's, where the northern territories remain the same. They are both advocating a hybrid system, where proportionality would be in effect in certain areas of Canada, and first past the post would remain in other areas of Canada.

I heard some of the discussion this afternoon. There was some comment about perhaps an extra seat being added to the three northern territories to have some minimum amount of proportionality in an election. I heard some of the members say that they thought Canada would be quite generous to that type of approach.

I really don't know if Canadians would be that generous to this kind of approach. Since I have been away from politics, I hear more and more that most Canadians aren't looking for more members of Parliament, particularly when the northern ridings are really well done by, by having only—what was it, Larry?—30,000 voters in the last election, about half the size of any riding in the rest of Canada. Nunavut had 18,000, and the Northwest Territories maybe 38,000.

Do we really think, and is it proper, with those small numbers of electors, that the northern ridings get another member? I somehow don't think Canadians are quite as generous as maybe some members think they would be, in adding members to northern ridings.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Mr. DeCoursey, go ahead.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our three panellists.

[*Translation*]

On behalf of my fellow Acadians in New Brunswick, I'd like to thank all the francophone Yukoners here this evening for their hospitality.

[*English*]

I want to allow Ms. Maunder to continue with the same line of questioning that Ms. May just posed. You mentioned that your preferred choice would be an MMP system, if we were to move to a form of proportional representation. Although we have heard some testimony to the contrary tonight, and elsewhere in our deliberations, the vast majority of witnesses who testify in front of us laid out a system of MMP whereby the territories would retain a single-member district, probably elected through first past the post, although you could move to an alternative vote for those ridings as well.

Would that be palatable for young people in the Yukon if the rest of Canada were to adopt some form of proportionality but your vote in the riding would continue to elect an MP more or less the same way?

**Ms. Shelby Maunder:** Again, I'm reluctant to speak on behalf of all youth.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** No, I think that's a fair comment. Please share your view, then.

**Ms. Shelby Maunder:** In my work, we try to increase youth being heard. I feel that retaining that system here, where they're not feeling heard through the electoral system, is probably not palatable to me.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** Fair enough.

In the conversation around lowering the voter age to 16, is there any movement within your organization to lobby perhaps the territorial government or municipal councils to look at that move as a way to demonstrate its potential success to the rest of Canada?

• (1925)

**Ms. Shelby Maunder:** Not at this time, but it's not a bad idea.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** In our deliberations we're always asking our witnesses to provide evidence from other jurisdictions. Perhaps that's a way in which a region of this country can demonstrate that lowering the voting age would allow young people to become engaged earlier, and then continue to be engaged in the process as they move along.

Ms. Maunder, you mentioned in your testimony that, yes, young people want their vote to count, but also big issues move the youth voter turnout at election time. What other things should we be cognizant of in not laying all the ills of low voter turnout on the current electoral system, in your view?

**Ms. Shelby Maunder:** Sorry, could you repeat that one more time?

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** We've heard time and again that, yes, there are Canadians who feel as though their vote doesn't count, so they don't turn out, but also, when there's not a big issue to move them to the voting booth, they don't show up. Or as Mr. McKinnon, tongue-in-cheek, testified this evening, there are a lot of things going on that keep people from showing up. What other sorts of factors should we be reminded of in our deliberations about wanting to increase voter participation?

We've heard a variety of testimony—André Blais' testimony sticks out—that a proportional system may help see voter participation increase by 3%, 4%, or 5%, but that's it's not a panacea, as one of our speakers at the open mike said earlier.

**Ms. Shelby Maunder:** Right. I don't know what it would look like exactly, but I think there's something to be said for electronic voting, if we're talking about competing with other things that are going on and having barriers to vote, whether it be transportation or knowing where your polling station is. I think that way could work and would certainly engage youth.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** Mr. McKinnon, do you have anything to add on other ways we can enhance voter turnout and voter participation?

**Mr. John McKinnon:** The 75% turnout in our federal election, and 75% consistently through our territorial elections, runs across all age groups. That runs across my age group, down to the middle-aged, to the first nations, to the young people in the Yukon. I don't know what we're doing, but we're definitely doing something right in getting our young people interested in elections.

I know that in just the last campaign, I can tell you that all of the federal parties had a youth group that was incredibly active in their organization. I can tell you that in any territorial election that I ran in, I always had a strong youth group following, and it's reflected in the percentage turnouts in territorial and federal elections in the Yukon.

**Mr. Matt DeCoursey:** It must speak in some way to the proximity that the electors have to their elected officials here, that they feel that close local representation. If you do figure out what you're doing right before October 7, please do submit it in a brief no longer than 3,000 words. Thank you very much.

**Mr. John McKinnon:** Thank you. We were so close that the nearest I could come was the Prince Edward Island constituencies, which were small, and the people knew their member. The elections were fun, because everybody knew everybody who was running.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll go now to Mr. Deltell.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Welcome to the committee, ladies and gentlemen.

I would like to extend a special hello to Éleine Michaud, the former member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, the riding next to mine. I think the last time we saw each other was at a debate at CHOI-FM almost a year ago. When I was in the provincial government, she was my joint MP, if you will, at the federal level. A third of my provincial riding was in her federal riding.

I always thought to myself that I could never be the member for Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, because it was way too big of a riding. It covers nearly 75 kilometres, running along the St. Lawrence all the way up to L'Étape. It's crazy. I thought it was an enormous riding until I came here, to Yukon, of course.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to address Mr. McKinnon.

[*English*]

I want to pay my respects to you, sir, for what you have done for your country, especially here for your territory and for your land. I deeply appreciate what you have done. We all remember that 11 years ago, in 2005, you were the senior adviser of an electoral reform committee, tabled by your government at that time, and you published a report in 2005.

First of all, what can we learn from from your experience 10 years ago that we can put to advantage today in this committee?

• (1930)

**Mr. John McKinnon:** It was so much easier looking at trying to change a territorial or provincial system than a federal one, because once you get into the federal one, you get into all of the problems that we've been talking about tonight, with the large rural...your riding, for goodness' sake.

For the provinces and territories, I suggested that you could, if you really wanted to, do the type of thing, that hybrid system, that you're talking about. I didn't recommend it; I just said that it was possible that it could be done in the Whitehorse ridings, which are still only about 1,000 electors in the largest of the Whitehorse ridings, going to several hundred electors in the Vuntut Gwitchin riding of Old Crow. You could possibly start combining Whitehorse ridings for a small proportionality type of election.

I had the ability, as you have had, of talking to all of the experts who came before the B.C. citizens' assembly, and all of them indicated that the most difficult problem that anybody could face was the large ridings with small populations. None of them, from David Farrell down to.... I forget the names of some of the others, but none of them had the answer to how it could really be done.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** But in this report tabled in 2005, on page 3 it says:

I would recommend first that a plebiscite be held at the next Territorial Election on the question of whether or not the public was in favour of the formation of a Citizens' Assembly to discuss the question of Electoral Reform.

Am I right saying that "plebiscite" means referendum?

**Mr. John McKinnon:** Yes.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** So you suggested a referendum.

**Mr. John McKinnon:** I'm sorry, can you read that again?

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Did you suggest a referendum in 2005?

**Mr. John McKinnon:** No, I didn't. I thought I suggested against a referendum.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** Why?

**Mr. John McKinnon:** Because at that time, I think I had talked to every one of the members who were going around at election time and asked them whether electoral reform was a burning issue on the doorsteps of Yukon people. Without exception—there was a debate in our legislature on electoral reform—and all of the leaders of all of the parties got up and said it just was not a burning issue.

So the leaders of all the parties said it wasn't a burning issue in 2005. The members who were going around door to door, the people who were trying to get elected, said it was not a burning issue at the doorstep. I said it was not a burning issue at the time, that there didn't have to be a referendum at the time, but that probably sometime in the future it would become an issue.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** It was because it was not an issue at that time.

**Mr. John McKinnon:** Yes.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** It was not a burning issue. If it were a burning issue, you would call a referendum.

**Mr. John McKinnon:** Yes.

**Mr. Gérard Deltell:** That's what I was thinking.

[Translation]

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[English]

Ms. Sahota.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. McKinnon, since we're going down this path anyway, having all your experience of working on electoral reform, what would you like this committee to come away with, knowing the nuances that we're dealing with and the differences in rural and urban areas? What would be your recommendation?

**Mr. John McKinnon:** I don't have the answer. I don't know whether the majority of Canadians feel they want a proportional system of government.

• (1935)

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** You don't know—

**Mr. John McKinnon:** I don't know whether they do. I know at the time I wrote my report that Yukoners did not consider electoral reform a burning issue. As to whether they do during this election that's coming up, I've asked some of my friends who are going to run to let me know whether it is a burning issue at the door.

I would advise them not to raise the question of electoral reform at the door, but if I were a member of the Fair Vote committee, I would keep anybody who knocked at my door there for the rest of the night asking them about STV and about MMPs. I think that would be the only door they would be able to hit that evening.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** What would your gut say about it? You obviously are very connected with your community here. I know that you haven't done a survey, perhaps, but what would your gut say at this time? Do you think this is a burning issue here in the Yukon?

**Mr. John McKinnon:** Since that time, I've moved from being in an urban riding out to the Yukon bush. The only people I really discuss things with are my grandkids now, so it's a little too early for me to be talking about MMP and STV.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Having been an adviser on this issue for many years, are you personally satisfied with the first-past-the-post system? Do you think we can change something and do better—or is now better? I don't want to influence your answer.

**Mr. John McKinnon:** I look at the number of women who have been leaders in the Yukon. I look at the number of first nations who have been leaders in the Yukon. I look at the voting percentages in both federal and territorial elections in the Yukon. I have to say that we've done pretty well by the first past the post system, until someone can prove to me that there's a better thing to come along.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** Okay.

Ms. Maunder, you talked about youth feeling that their vote doesn't count. We hear that often. Is that perhaps a sentiment that can mean a couple of different things?

It wasn't too long ago that I would consider myself a youth as well, but a lot of my friends aren't interested in politics, and therefore they don't vote. They don't know what first past the post is or how the vote gets calculated. They haven't even thought about what the likely outcome would be, if it's fair or unfair. They just think that government is government and they're all alike, and all the parties are alike, and not much changes in their life at the end of the day.

These are the kinds of things I've heard from people I talk to, even in this past election. Sometimes in that sentiment, they often end off saying, "Oh, my vote doesn't really count, because what is it going to really matter? It's fine if everyone else goes and votes, and it's all going to be the same at the end of the day." Could that be part of what they're feeling?

**Ms. Shelby Maunder:** Yes, I suppose it could be.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** I know that here your turnout is very high, so maybe you're not faced with that as much as we are in our areas.

**Ms. Shelby Maunder:** Yes. If that is a reason for youth not wanting to go to the polls, then I think we need to look at our system anyway. If they're apathetic in that way, because government is government, and politics is politics, and it's going to be that way, then I think there is still something that needs to change.

**Ms. Ruby Sahota:** What I find interesting is that voter turnout amongst all populations is on the downturn all across the world. Even in New Zealand, once they changed their system, it spiked up for a bit, by a few percentages, and then it came right back down again, and we're not too far off the general trend all across the world. The point is noted that we need to do something about it, but even when you compare countries with different types of voting systems, the turn is still downward, regardless of the system. It's not on the increase.

**The Chair:** Thanks very much. We're over time.

We'll go to Mr. Boulерice.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulерice:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd also like to thank the three witnesses for their presentations, as well as all those who went out of their way to be here this evening.

I'll go ahead and warn the interpreters that, even though I'll be speaking French, I'm going to use the English term "first past the post" because it's faster to say and packs a bigger punch than the French term "système uninominal majoritaire à un tour".

This special committee was given a mandate to study the issue of an alternative voting system for the Canadian federation. The Prime Minister was very clear during the election campaign. He said that the 2015 federal election would be the last such election under the first-past-the-post voting system, and the reasons for that are obvious. The system creates false majorities and significantly distorts the true will of the electorate, Canadian voters. These false majorities misrepresent the will of the people. Election results no longer reflect the reality, the choices people have made, or their desire to have their voice represented in Parliament.

Ms. Michaud, you are proposing a mixed member proportional system that would partly resolve those issues while maintaining the link with a local elected representative, something everyone wants. But there are a number of ways to do that: through provincial or regional lists or through larger ridings—perhaps not for Yukon—with three, six, or seven members per large riding.

Which of the two systems do you prefer?

• (1940)

**Ms. Éleine Michaud:** That's an excellent question.

I, personally, really like the idea of provincial, territorial, or regional lists, depending on how you want to do it. There's a lot of potential there.

As I mentioned during my presentation, electoral reforms could be an opportunity for the parties to nominate more candidates who are women or minorities, who aren't always represented.

We are told that the Senate will be the answer to the issue of regional representation, but I think we've just found a good alternative to that. The Senate no longer needs to ensure regional representation if democratically elected members fulfill that role. I think that's something the committee members should think about.

Perhaps we could cut down on expenses. Perhaps we could save the \$92 million incurred in Senate-related spending every year. That money could be reinvested in our voting system to ensure better representation.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulерice:** Some of the objectives of our electoral reform study are to achieve better representation, retain the link with a local elected representative, and ensure that the voting process does not become overly complex.

I have a confession. I held mock elections in senior kindergarten classes for five-year-olds. I can't deny that I used the first-past-the-post system because it was indeed more straightforward. The kids weren't voting for a candidate from a political party but, rather, an animal that would represent their class.

**The Chair:** Which animal won, Mr. Boulерice?

**Mr. Alexandre Boulерice:** The giraffe won.

Under a mixed member proportional system, people have to cast two votes, as they do in Germany, where people vote directly for a local representative and a candidate from the party lists.

Do you think Quebecers, Canadians, and Yukoners could handle that level of complexity?

**Ms. Éleine Michaud:** I would like to think so. I think all Canadians, in every part of the country, are smart enough to fill out two ballots. I'm not too concerned about that.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulерice:** Mr. Chair, how much time do I have left?

**The Chair:** You have about a minute left.

**Mr. Alexandre Boulерice:** Ms. Maunder, are you in favour of having polling stations for students on college and university campuses in order to make it easier for young people to vote in an election?

[*English*]

**Ms. Shelby Maunder:** Yes.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alexandre Boulерice:** Mr. McKinnon, you've done a lot of work on this issue, and yet you still seem to be reluctant to say which system you prefer. You are probably the most knowledgeable among us, but it may be your knowledge that makes you reluctant.

Would a system offering larger multi-member ridings make it possible to achieve a certain degree of proportionality while preserving the important link with an elected local representative?

[English]

**Mr. John McKinnon:** It would. A small portion of proportionality.... As we all know from everything we've read or studied on a proportional system, the more people you have running in a riding, the purer proportionality you're going to get. There would be some measure of proportionality with the two-ballot system in a large northern riding.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We'll go to Mr. Kelly.

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Thank you.

I'd like to talk again a little bit about online voting. I heard Ms. Maunder speak of the desirability of online voting to make it more convenient, convenience or inconvenience being seemingly a barrier to youth participation in elections.

We had a member of the public from an earlier session this afternoon speak quite strongly in opposition to electronic voting due to all of the issues of security, of the potential for fraud, and the servers that are outside of Canada through which the voting system would be filtered.

How important would online voting be to the goal of enhancing the participation of younger people?

• (1945)

**Ms. Shelby Maunder:** As Mr. Cullen mentioned, BYTE is not expert in electoral reform, and we're not engaging youth on this topic all the time, but I was reading earlier that 70% of Canadians are in favour of online voting, and I think that, with such strong numbers, it's only reasonable to expect that it would increase turnout and youth turnout as well.

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Another witness earlier today spoke of the particular vulnerabilities of remote communities to access. It doesn't take much for an Internet connection to go down over a large area in remote communities. Were this to happen on an election day, with perhaps a more catastrophic problem than even a storm or other conditions, would that be that a factor? Would this have to be addressed with online voting?

**Ms. Shelby Maunder:** Yes, absolutely, and anyone who works and lives here has experience of our one fibre optic cable getting knocked out, but I don't necessarily think that should deter us from exploring online voting. That's maybe an issue of having some redundancy in our communities.

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** With respect to the voting age, no province or territory has experimented, that I'm aware of, with a voting age below 18. However, many political parties at both the provincial and federal levels have candidate selection, leadership selection, delegate selection to conventions, and any of a number of activities of political party membership available to some at 16 years and some at 14 years; I don't know if it goes lower than 14.

Having participated in a competitive nomination for a party with a voting age of 16, I'm wondering to what extent opening up the vote to a 16-year-old is an exercise in granting an extra vote to that child's parents.

**Ms. Shelby Maunder:** That's a great question. I think we're all influenced by the people who raise us, but I don't think that negates a youth's ability to think for themselves and explore the issue.

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** Most other candidates here have had various experiences with this, but many families tend to vote in blocks in candidate nominations. I don't think you have too many instances where a family of four votes for two, three, or four different candidates in a nomination. I wonder if a general election would be similarly granting additional electoral strength to single families.

Am I okay for time?

**The Chair:** You have about 30 seconds left.

**Mr. Pat Kelly:** In the interest of keeping our meeting going, I'll turn it back over to you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Kelly. I appreciate that.

Finally, Mr. Aldag, please.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Ms. Michaud, I'll start with you. I'd like your thoughts as somebody who has served, who has campaigned, and you're here representing the NDP with a position for some form of proportional representation.

The riding that I'm in had been held by the opposition party since the early 1950s, so I hear from a lot of those constituents and I hear from a lot of my Liberal supporters. Between those two groups it represents about 70% of the votes for my riding. A perspective I've heard from them is that many of those supporters like the idea of majority governments. They like the idea of being able to have the Liberals in and bring in policies, but if the Liberals make a mistake then they can get rid of them and bring in the Conservatives.

There's this sense—and it may not be true—that minority governments can lead to compromises in policies, that you can have minority governments wielding a disproportionate share of power. A party can influence big spending. In your opening statements you talked about day care, and it reminds me that there was actually a national day care strategy that been negotiated under the Liberals in a minority government and it was through the Bloc, the NDP, and the Conservatives collaborating that brought down the Martin government and that saw the end to a national day care program, and the Kelowna Accord—

What's that?

• (1950)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** You can do it now.

**Mr. John Aldag:** There was also Kyoto, essentially. So there's always this fear, I think. A lot of my constituents ask why we would go to any sort of system that leads to a proportional representation system because of those things. You've campaigned and you're representing this. What are the arguments we can put forward to try to solve this as the best idea for Canada at this point in time?

**Ms. Éleine Michaud:** In the case of mixed member proportional representation, what I'm seeing is not necessarily minority government but coalition government. There would be a possibility of more parties represented around the table, so there's a need to compromise. There's a need to actually take into account not only the government's ideology and ideas but everybody else's as well, which are generally pushed aside because, you know what, we're a majority government and you can take a back seat for a few years and we'll see next election.

What I heard when I was a member of Parliament from my constituents was that they were disheartened by all this bickering that happened in the House, first of all. Also, they did not like the fact that a majority government could just dismiss any opposition that was being voiced by the public, by opposition MPs who represented them.

So I would argue that a lot of people would actually prefer more dialogue, more compromise in the House to actually get with a better solution. I think very often each political party holds a bit of the answer for big issues that affect all Canadians, but if there's a majority government that doesn't need to listen to the opposition parties, well, they won't. They're just going to do their own thing. Then many Canadians are just not represented at all and don't feel their voice matters.

So I would argue that more discussion, more negotiation, and a coalition government would make a lot more sense and would be a fair resolution for a lot of issues that we're seeing right now with the system we have.

**Mr. John Aldag:** Okay, thank you. It's great hearing that from the perspective that you had over a period of time as a member of the opposition under a majority government. Thank you.

Ms. Maunder, I wanted to ask you about something you touched a bit on in your comments. I'd just like to go back to it. You said the youth will get out and vote when there's a big issue at stake. I know in my campaign I tried engaging youth, and talked to them. There were things like the fact that the current government was going to change the retirement age to 67 instead of 65, which wasn't very immediate. A lot of the young people I was looking at were looking forward to the weekend, not 50 years down the road.

You indicated that you did see youth come out because there was something at stake, but this was, I think, maybe an extreme case in 2015 where people were ready for change. What kinds of big issues do you think actually will get youth to participate in electoral processes?

**Ms. Shelby Maunder:** I know that here when we do our Yukon Youth Want campaign, a lot of the issues are not necessarily youth issues. We hear youth talk a lot about job opportunities, minimum wage, housing, affordable housing specifically, and education and access to education. I think those are issues that concern lots of people, not just youth, but I think that our generation is feeling the squeeze on a lot of those things. I think those are the types of issues that will maybe bring some of us to the polls.

• (1955)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

We're at the end of hearing from our witness panel. We will now go into the open-mike session.

We're setting the witnesses free. You can stay, of course. You're most welcome to stay, but we're going to have members of the public come up to the two microphones that are directly in front of me.

Thank you so much for your testimony, by the way. It was very informative and allowed us to look at things from a different angle.

The way we proceed in the open-mike session is to give each member of the public who wants to speak two minutes to present their views. So far it has worked beautifully. Everybody speaks for around two minutes. By respecting the two-minute limit, it gives everybody a chance to speak.

I'll ask two people to come to the mikes—to mike one, Donald Joseph Roberts, and to mike two, Michael James Lauer.

Mr. Roberts, go ahead, please. You have two minutes.

**Mr. Donald Roberts (As an Individual):** I've been in the Yukon for over 50 years. I came here as an educator, as a school principal, and retired as a school administrator. I have always been involved in politics in one shape or form.

I really took advantage of that when I retired and decided maybe I have something to learn. I went into politics and became a minister in the government at the time, in 2000. I only lasted two and a half years as a minister, because basically I challenged the system. I challenged the leader.

What we have in first past the post is almost a dictatorship if you have leaders who don't know how to deal with people. You have to remember that I was a school administrator, so I dealt with people all the time. Basically, collaboration, working together, was the issue, not trying to set up your own strength. We're very fortunate here to have an MP who does collaborate, but that doesn't happen all the time. Basically, in territorial politics, it's even worse. We hear many people in the Yukon—I've been to many doors—say, "We don't need party politics here in the Yukon". When you're looking at 15,000 voters, you have a lot of issues. We meet these people all the time, whether you win, lose, or draw.

The important part for me is that we need a change. I'm not going to tell you what kind of change we need, because there are many models. Today we've talked about that.

I appreciate being able to share my concerns. Many Yukoners want a change. It doesn't matter what it is, but I think we will have to make sure it's something that reflects what the north is.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Roberts.

Before we go to you, Mr. Lauer, I would ask Lauren Elizabeth Muir to take mike one.

Go ahead, Mr. Lauer.

**Mr. Michael Lauer (As an Individual):** First of all, I want to welcome all of you and thank the committee for coming to Whitehorse. As well, I'd like to thank everybody else who's been participating in this process in a thoughtful and respectful manner.

No solution will be perfect, and not everyone will be happy with whatever the outcome is of what you put forward or what the government will end up putting forward. If something is adopted, there will be a number of Canadians who still aren't happy for various reasons.

I feel we need a system that will guarantee local representation and be consistent across the country, as we need to also defend whatever the system is. It must work in rural and urban ridings. One of the questions that was asked about the north is that if we get special status, then that's something we have to defend. About a third of the ridings in the country are rural. It's just something that needs to work across the country.

The system must also be easy to understand and communicate, as some of the proposed systems mentioned have been anything but easy to understand and communicate.

There are also constitutional issues, as a number of jurisdictions are guaranteed a number of seats based on the number of senators. Some of the proposed changes could run into problems around the Constitution. I don't think there's any desire to open up the Constitution.

Looking at the Yukon where we have only one seat, as with our sister territories, or even for some of the smaller provinces that have four, seven, 10, or 11 seats, we see that not all the proposed solutions are workable while maintaining local representation. With proportional representation or mixed member proportional representation, how would any of the single-seat territories elect their MP? Therefore, there are only two potential solutions that would work in the territories. One is the current first past the post. As we've seen since 1979, all three territories have elected members of all three national parties. The process has worked for all the major parties. The other potential option is the ranked ballot. I think the majority of the pundits and those who have talked about a ranked ballot favour the Liberal Party as a centrist party over the rest of the parties.

Just dealing with the issue of a referendum, there's been an argument that 68% of Canadians voted for one of the parties that proposed change in the electoral system. But the three parties didn't propose the same type of change. We've also seen recent polling that had between 55% and 73% of Canadians in favour of a referendum if we're going to change the voting system.

Last but not least, our democracy is far too valuable to let fewer than 1% of Canadians decide how we will elect our government for generations to come.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak.

• (2000)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I would invite Mr. Colin Whitlaw to take mike two.

We'll hear now from Ms. Muir.

**Ms. Lauren Muir (As an Individual):** Hi. I'm talking to you tonight both as a parent of two teenagers, one 16 and one 18, and also as someone who grew up in southern Ontario, in the ridings where there are a lot of people. I also moved north. I lived in the Northwest Territories and experienced that system, and now I also live in the Yukon.

I'm also speaking to you as a policy analyst. With that in mind, I was speaking with Mr. Aldag at the break. We here in the Yukon do things collaboratively. It's the same in the Northwest Territories. Basically, because you don't have the population, you have to work together. We do know each other on an individual basis. Half of the time someone will ask me what someone's last name is: "I don't know. It's Larry, our MP." That's how it works here. We need each other.

But the other thing, too, is that when we had to basically come to some really tough decisions, we did it, even though it was a complicated answer, by basically identifying first the values that we wanted to keep and the principles. After that, we sat down to figure out the formula. It was a mathematical formula; it was not one simple system. In order to account for the rural communities, in order to account for the larger municipalities, that's what we had to do.

Once we did that, then we took it back out to everyone, because it was everybody's right to know and to have a voice on it. Then we were able to say, as a checklist, "Oh, and by the way, it meets these values. It meets these principles." We could prove that. We did have to basically do up a calculator as a tool for the spreadsheets so the people could see what it did for them. They need that kind of an example.

As far as the youth go, I'm sorry, a big part of it, yes, is the education system and having them walk through it. Even though it was kindergarten, you remember that event. But we also dragged our kids out every time we had to go to vote.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thanks very much.

Could Brook Land-Murphy take mike one?

Mr. Whitlaw.

**Mr. Colin Whitlaw (As an Individual):** Hello.

I'd like to talk about the importance of geographical representation in a federal system. I've been around a few federal systems. I spent some time doing a couple of degrees in Belgium, and I spent some time in Brazil. In a federal system like Canada's, it's very important to have geographical representation. The reason for that is that a federal system, of course, splits the competencies, the powers, between your federal, provincial, and municipal types of government. Those powers are administered by those particular governments.

If you go to a non-regional form of representation, then those regions no longer have a direct say in federal politics, such as national defence, fisheries, pipelines, or first nations. For that reason, I think any form of proportional representation is the wrong way to go. It's not because proportional representation is a bad thing, but because there are other ways to adequately represent Canadians. There are other democratic considerations that need to be taken into account in terms of representation, particularly geographical.

That's all.

• (2005)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I would invite Ms. Mary Elizabeth Amerongen, please, to go to mike two.

Ms. Land-Murphy, please go ahead.

**Ms. Brook Land-Murphy (As an Individual):** Good evening. I am honoured and truly excited to be able to address the committee tonight. Your being here and your mandate are amazing. It gives me hope.

I have three points I want to make. I hope I can make them in two minutes.

First, regarding the proposal to have the decision ultimately put to a referendum, which I understand is being floated by at least one party, I strongly oppose this. I think this is really a backdoor and slightly cowardly way of trying to avoid change to the system. The Liberals were elected on a clear platform for change of the electoral system, and that is all the mandate that is needed to actually change the electoral system.

Second, I am strongly in favour of proportional representation. I do not have a specific system I'm endorsing, as I'm not an expert in that, but I do want to share with you my experience with first past the post. I have voted in every election that I was eligible to vote in except for this last one, when I was travelling. I have never had someone for whom I voted get elected. That could be because my values do not align with those of a lot of Canadians. At the same time, my values, my opinions, and what I want to see our government do—I think I should have a voice in that.

Third, just because a large number of the committee members seem to be focused on the issue of local versus proportional representation, and on Mr. McKinnon's testimony specifically, I want to address that. In our current system, with votes and centralized power in the PM's office, I do not personally place a large degree of importance on local representation, and certainly not in having a proportional representation system implemented.

I would note that I worked with Fair Vote Yukon for a number of years. We got hundreds of signatures to petition the territorial government to look at electoral reform, so I'm not alone in prioritizing, if it comes down to a choice, electoral reform over having perhaps strong local representation.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Samuel Connor Whitehouse, please go to mike one.

Go ahead, Ms. Amerongen.

**Ms. Mary Amerongen (As an Individual):** Thank you all for your work here. It really is hopeful that we're discussing this.

I have been involved in elections since I was 10 years old. I grew up in Edmonton, and I've lived here now for 16 years. I've done a lot of door-to-door on both sides of the spectrum.

I really believe people need to have their vote count. We need a form of proportional representation, possibly the mixed one, but I'm not an expert in that. I don't know how it would work in the Yukon, but we really need a fair and proportional vote.

When a government that doesn't have a majority can assault the environment the way a previous federal government did, there's a serious problem; we don't have a working democracy. There are many other examples of that. When the people who form the government can steamroll over all opposition, that's wrong. At least with a minority government people talk and have to co-operate, compromise, and listen to all views. That is more fair—not perfect, but far more fair and far more right and just.

I do not think there should be a referendum. Prime Minister Trudeau was very clear that the election we had last October would be the last first past the post one. There is a mandate for change that should go ahead.

I also believe there should be no forced vote in which people are fined. People who don't want to vote tend to be people who really don't know what's going on, so I don't think they should be forced to vote.

I've just left work...for many years with people who are somewhat disadvantaged and have difficulty with housing at times. We're also in a very tight housing market. In that situation, where people need to have an approved address to vote, it is not fair. People are disenfranchised by that.

Thank you for your attention.

• (2010)

**The Chair:** Thank you very much for your time.

I would ask Mr. Michael Denis Dougherty to come to mike two.

Mr. Whitehouse, go ahead, please, for two minutes.

**Mr. Samuel Whitehouse (As an Individual):** I'd like to thank you and the Special Committee on Electoral Reform for hosting this meeting today.

I wish I could tell you that I'm pleased to be here this evening to take part in perhaps the most important dialogue Canadians have ever had on Canada's democracy, but I'm not pleased, Mr. Chair. In fact, I'm far from pleased to be here. I'm here today because the Liberal Party of Canada is trying to change Canada's democracy without the consent of the people.

Canadians need to know that the Liberals are planning to change Canada's democracy simply by a Liberal majority vote in the House of Commons. Canadians know that how we vote is one of the most important rights we have in this country. Canada's democracy is one of the most stable and admired democracies in the world, and the Liberals plan to push through unprecedented change and reform to our democracy without the consent of the people.

Voters must have a say. If there's going to be a fundamental change to Canada's democracy, there must be a direct popular mandate. The only way to ensure that every Canadian has a say on change this significant is by way of a national referendum on electoral reform. A national referendum on electoral reform is the only way to ensure that every Canadian has a say, but the Liberals are refusing to hold a referendum.

The simple fact that the Liberals are even considering changing our democracy without a referendum, that simple fact, clearly demonstrates the Liberals' complete disregard for the will of the electorate—the people, Mr. Chair, the people. Our democracy belongs to the people and not the Liberal Party of Canada.

There is already provincial precedent to hold referendums when voters are faced with an option for electoral reform. British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, and Ontario have all held referendums on electoral reform. These discussions and meetings are simply the Liberals' attempt to validate their illegitimate process and ignore the will of Canadians. This so-called consultation process cannot and will not deliver a direct popular mandate.

Mr. Chair, this is about the value of our vote. There is only one way to consult every Canadian. There needs to be a national referendum on electoral reform.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Just as a small reminder, though, this is a legislative committee. We're not making any decisions on ultimately a referendum, yes or no.

Yes, Ms. May.

**Ms. Elizabeth May:** I would like to reassure you, Mr. Whitehouse, that if you look at this table...and I can see that you are very angry at the Liberal Party, but they are a minority at this table. This is a very interesting committee. I'd urge you to know that we've heard you, but this committee actually includes Liberals, Conservatives, NDP, Bloc Québécois, and the Green Party.

I just wanted to reassure you about that, because perhaps later you can find some Liberals and talk to them.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. May.

Mr. Paul Davis Woodard—

• (2015)

**Mr. Paul Davis (As an Individual):** Woodard is my middle name, and I never use it. They read it off my ID.

**The Chair:** Okay, it's Mr. Davis. Is that it?

**A voice:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Go ahead, Mr. Dougherty.

**Mr. Michael Dougherty (As an Individual):** Thank you, and thanks very much for taking the time to be with us here in the Yukon.

I just wanted to frame the conversation in the larger context to say that electoral reform is only part of the democratic reform that's essential. As an educator, I see before me the children in the late grades at elementary school and early high school who will be the decision-makers in mid-century. The challenges they will be facing will probably be among the most serious challenges that the human race has ever faced in terms of the cascading effects of environmental neglect, rising population, and a whole variety of elements that are going to make mid-century incredibly stressful and challenging.

How do we build the social capital that's necessary to build that flexible, resilient system that's needed? Your work here is one aspect of it, but it should be seen in that larger context of what you're building toward. It has to be the kind of democratic structure that can endure the stresses that are going to be placed upon it mid-century. How do we put the foundation in now that demands of the citizenry an active and engaged population that does indeed build the framework necessary to succeed as a country, as a people, as a world?

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Finally, Mr. Davis, please.

**Mr. Paul Davis:** Thanks, everybody.

[*Translation*]

Welcome and thank you to those who came such a long way to attend this meeting.

[*English*]

Thanks, everybody, for putting up with small airline seats to come here.

I'm just coming from a volunteer meeting where I'm signing off on financial statements for Burning Away the Winter Blues, one of our celebrations of our northern culture. I can tell you that we have maybe 300 people in the Yukon who are active in a partisan way in politics. It's exhausting to be part of elections, where you put all sorts of effort in, and first past the post means we don't really seem to get the results we might have wanted as a community.

I'm only going to urge you to please get us out of first past the post. I think proportional representation with a ranked ballot is probably the way to go. How we get there, I'm not sure. But I just want to speak on behalf of all the people who put effort into this to say that the existing system, first past the post, is really not reflecting our wishes.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you to everyone who attended this evening. Thank you to the witnesses. Thank you to those who were here in the audience listening. Thank you to those who came up to the mikes to share your views with us.

We've had a great day in Whitehorse. Personally, I wish we could stay longer, but we continue with our travels tomorrow.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Can I move a motion, Chair? Is that how it's done?

**A voice:** To stay longer?

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Victoria is nice, but it's no Whitehorse, Chair. Victoria's a nice place, but....

**The Chair:** We have reservations and all that. We'd have to pay cancellation fees.

**Voices:** Oh, oh!

**A voice:** Let's take a vote.

**The Chair:** Thank you. The meeting is adjourned.

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