



Electoral Reform

Results of Public Engagement

October 4 to December 14, 2018



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Executive summary

The Government of Yukon wants to strengthen our democracy – and asked for your input to help make sure we head in the right direction.

A public engagement on electoral reform took place from October 4 to December 14, 2018. We asked what issues are most important to you when it comes to making your voice heard, putting your vote to work, and improving how territorial political parties and elected governments work. In total, we heard from 840 individuals, two community organizations and one Yukon First Nations government.

The priorities you and other Yukoners identified will inform the mandate of an independent commission on electoral reform. In order from highest to lowest priority, we heard that the commission should focus its work on the following.

Options to ensure our electoral system captures the intentions of voters as well as possible

- This work should include public education and public engagement on possible options for electoral system reform.
- If the commission determines that Yukoners want electoral system reform, it may also recommend the strongest electoral system for territorial elections and propose a way for bringing their recommendations forward to voters in a way that supports informed choice.

Options to improve how political parties and elected representatives work

- This work should include options for fair and transparent elections, political fundraising and spending rules, and a more open and accountable legislature.



Options to improve how citizens make their voices heard

- This work should include options to make sure people have flexible and accessible voting options, are registered to vote, have the information they need to vote and understand how government works.

Underlying much of this written and verbal feedback was a recognition of the interrelationship among these three different elements of our democracy. In other words, many of you indicated that not only would strengthening one element help strengthen other areas, but also that each element is needed for the overall health of our democracy.

While this was an opt-in engagement and the results are neither representative of nor generalizable to the broader public, the findings of the engagement suggest a clear public preference for the desired role and focus of the independent commission on electoral reform.



Methodology

We advertised the public engagement through social media, newspapers, radio, EngageYukon.ca and brochures mailed to households across the territory. Options for providing input included surveys and emailing feedback to electoral.reform@gov.yk.ca.

We also sent 47 letters and emails to Yukon First Nations governments and community organizations inviting them to help make sure all Yukoners knew about the engagement and to provide feedback on their priorities for improving the overall accessibility and inclusivity of our democracy.

Types of questions

| | |
|--|--|
| Making your voice heard | Civic education, voter information, voter registration, voting options, non-voting options |
| Putting your vote to work | Public education, public engagement, research on electoral system reform, role of the commission if public engagement indicated a desire to change to a different electoral system |
| Political parties and elected officials | Diversity and inclusion, political fundraising and spending, fair and transparent elections, open and accountable legislature |
| Overall priority | Most important topic for the commission to focus on |
| Demographics | Age, gender, residency |

In total, we received 836 completed surveys, including 705 written comments. The Yukon Bureau of Statistics collected and anonymized all the responses. We analyzed the quantitative responses using frequency tables and graphs. Write-in responses were coded and analyzed thematically. The chart below provides a guide for how



commonly a same or similar issue was identified during the analysis. This chart is referenced throughout the remainder of this report.

Less commonly ← → **More commonly**

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--|---|--|
| A few times (less than 5) | Several times (about 5-10) | A fair number of times (about 10-15) | A moderate number of times (about 15-20) | A large number of times (about 20-50) | A very large number of times (50+) |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|--|---|--|

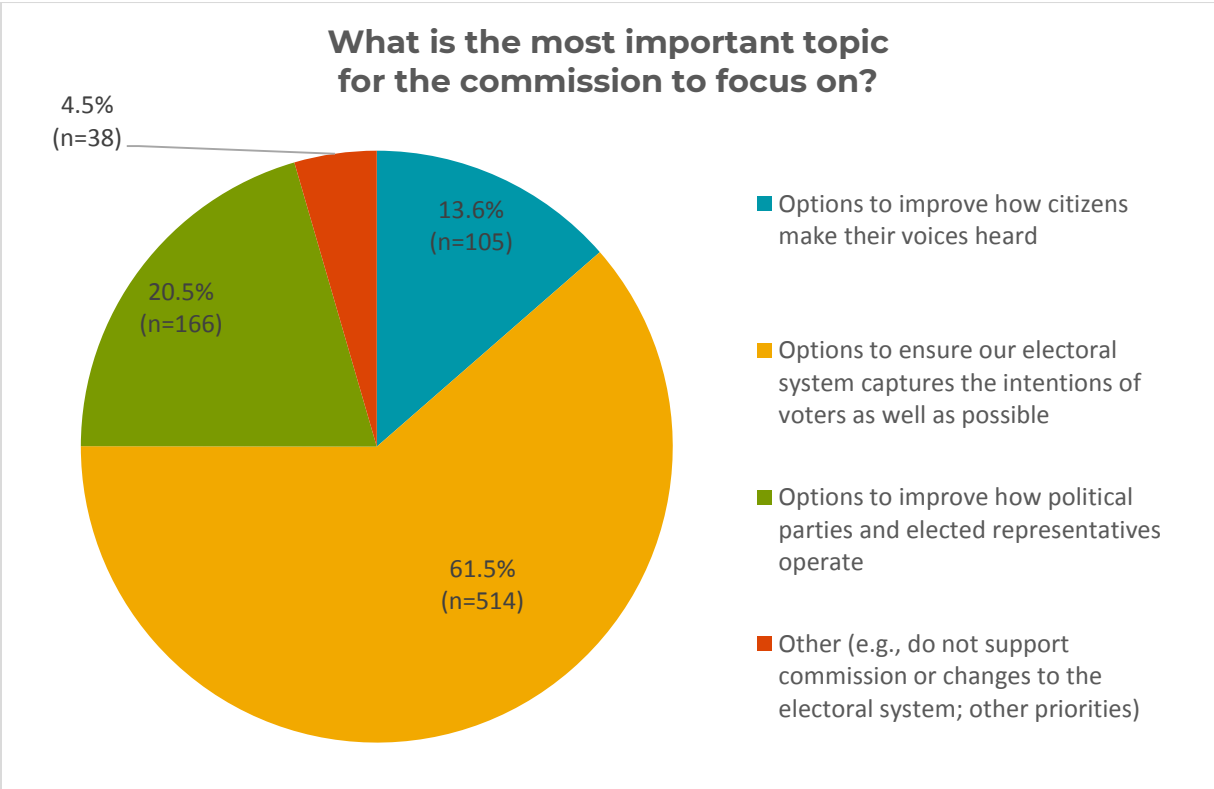
In addition to the survey, we also received feedback from two community organizations, one Yukon First Nations government and four individuals. We coded and thematically analyzed this feedback, which was collected through written submissions, emails and in-person meetings. These findings are also integrated throughout the remainder of this report.



Overall priority of the commission

In recognition that electoral reform is a broad topic that means different things to different people, we asked you what you thought was the most important topic for the commission to focus on.

A majority of survey respondents (61.5%) indicated that the most important topic for the commission to focus on is “options to ensure our electoral system captures the intentions of voters as well as possible.” A smaller number of respondents (20.5%) thought “options to improve how political parties and elected representatives work” is most important, while another 13.6% thought the commission should focus on “options to improve how citizens make their voices heard.” A small minority (4.5%) indicated a different preference, such as not having a commission or not pursuing electoral reform.



Electoral system reform was also the primary theme in the non-survey feedback. However, the other major priority was improving how citizens make their voices heard or, more specifically, improving the accessibility of the electoral system and supporting civic education and engagement so that everyone who is eligible to vote has the ability and opportunity to do so.

Throughout the engagement results, there was recognition of the interrelationship among the different elements of our democracy and specifically the three major topics of electoral reform identified in the engagement questions. This recognition was both implicit and explicit.

For example, some respondents implied that improving how Yukoners make their voices heard will not matter if elected officials are not listening or do not work together to govern well. Others spoke about the need for better representation of certain voices, such as those living in communities outside of Whitehorse, which could be achieved by measures under all three categories of electoral reform. Finally, some others explicitly stated their belief that improving the electoral system would address all other issues by supporting a more representative and accountable legislature. In other words, there is an understanding that strengthening one element of our system can help strengthen others, but also that all three are needed for a healthy democracy.

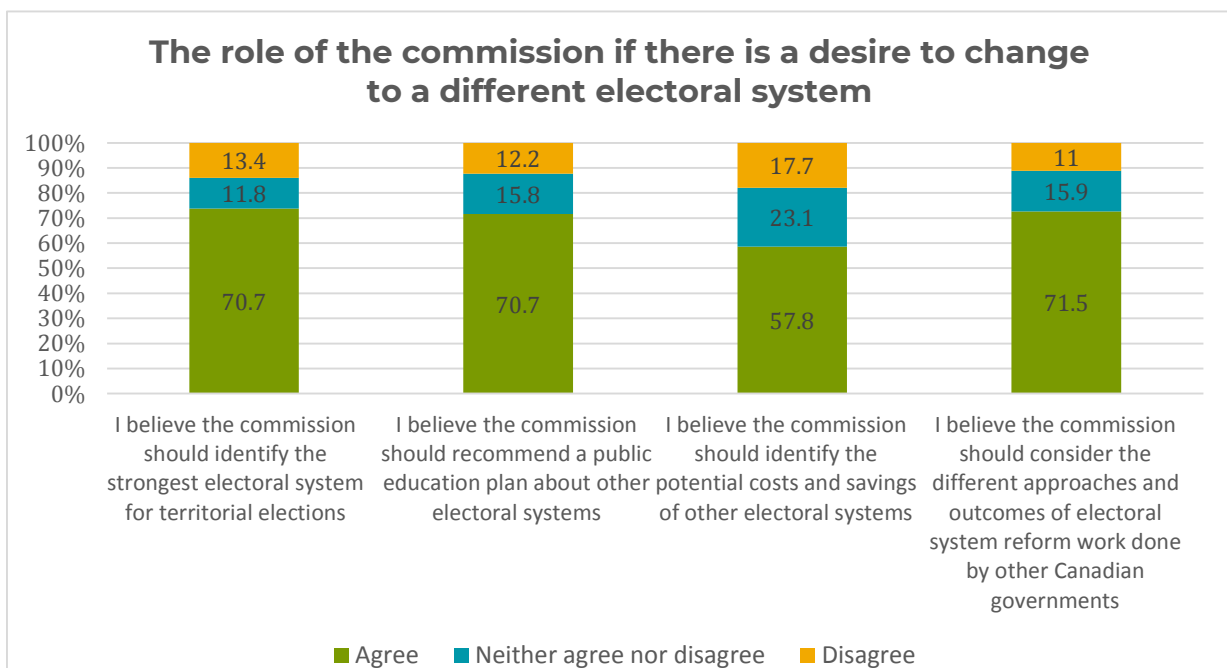
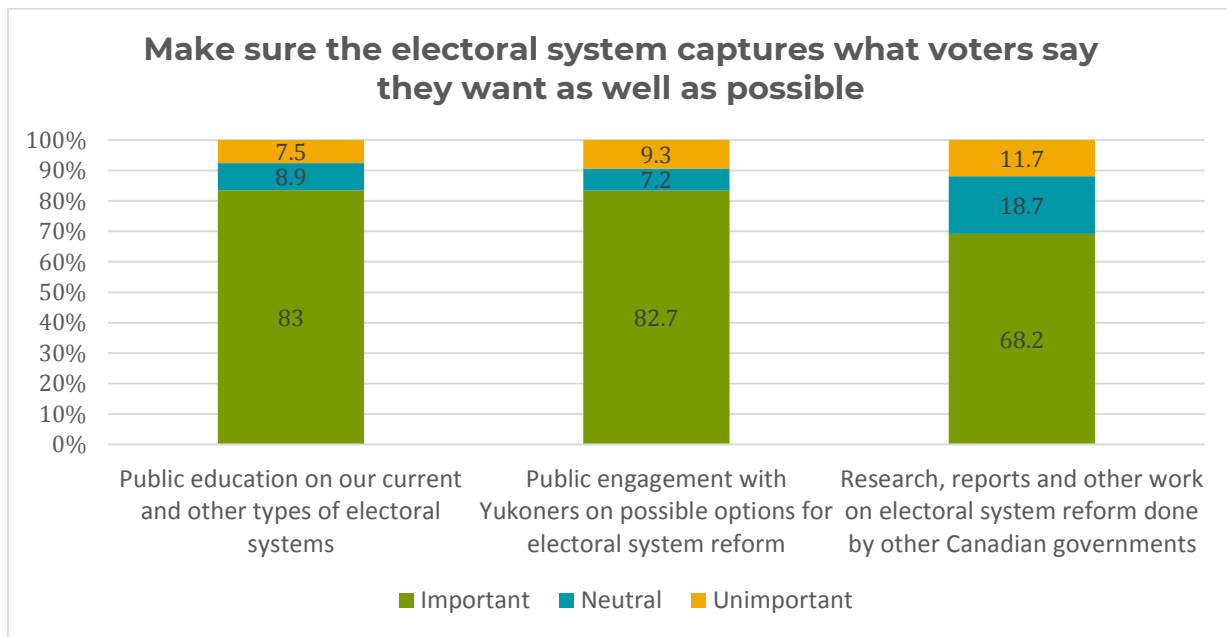
1. Putting your vote to work

Electoral systems determine how votes get turned into elected seats in the Yukon Legislative Assembly. There are many types of electoral systems in the world and there are advantages and disadvantages to each. Right now, all Canadian provinces and territories use the same “first-past-the-post” system. Some jurisdictions have held referenda to ask the public whether they want to switch to another type of electoral system. BC recently held a referendum on this topic in 2018 and PEI is expected to hold a referendum on the same topic in 2019.

We will ask the Commission on Electoral Reform to suggest ways to make sure Yukon’s electoral system captures what voters say they want as well as possible and to make sure Yukoners can have meaningful conversations about this topic.



To help guide the work of the commission, we asked you how important it is that the commission focus on certain topics. Among survey respondents, there was higher agreement that it was important or very important for the commission to focus on “public education on our current and other types of electoral system” (83%) and “public engagement with Yukoners on possible options for electoral system reform” (83%). There was slightly lower agreement on the importance of looking at “research, reports and other work on electoral system reform done by other Canadian governments” (68%).



Key themes

Thematic analysis of the written survey comments provides additional insight into the views and values of respondents, and identified three key themes. First, that there are strongly opposing views on the need for electoral system reform. Some respondents think that first-past-the-post works just fine while others want to see it either modified or wholly replaced. Relatedly, some respondents believe it is only a small vocal minority of people pushing for electoral reform, while others suggest the majority of the public are simply not aware or informed about other types of electoral systems. Yukon's small and unique nature was raised on both sides of the electoral reform argument: on one hand as a reason for not wasting public money to fix something that is not broken and, on the other, as a reason why it would be relatively easier and more impactful to experiment with electoral reform. A second theme focused on transparency and a desire for the Government of Yukon to be upfront about whether or not it is willing to change the electoral system, with several references made to the Government of Canada's 2016 – 17 consultation on electoral reform. The third theme centres on informed choice, or the need for public education before further public engagement or any vote on the commission's final recommendations.

Role of the commission

A few survey respondents did not support establishing the commission and several respondents suggested or would have preferred a citizens' assembly. Among those that were supportive of a commission, a fair number of respondents requested the commission solely focus on electoral system change. With respect to the decision-making authority of the commission, a few respondents indicated a preference for the commission to only summarize what they learned or heard, while a few others suggested it have the authority to actually implement changes. A large number of respondents thought the public should vote in a referendum on any recommended changes to the electoral system, whether they are brought forward by the commission or the government itself.



Research, reports, and other work on electoral system reform

A large number of survey respondents wanted the commission to not only look at Canadian but also international experiences with electoral reform or using other electoral systems. Several respondents requested that such research not include electoral system costs or savings, while a few others did not think any new research was needed. The qualities of research referenced by respondents included being objective, non-partisan and including how voting and governance work in practice.

Public education on different electoral systems

Several respondents were supportive of education on all types of electoral systems while several other respondents wanted to focus only on first-past-the-post and proportional representation systems. Several respondents considered it to be important for public education to identify the pros and cons of each electoral system. Other desired qualities referenced by respondents included making electoral systems easy to understand, fully explaining how they work in practice – including the long-term effects of electoral systems – and resulting in informed choice. Several survey respondents considered it imperative that public education precede any referenda on electoral system reform.

Public engagement on possible options for electoral reform

Several respondents expressed an interest in focusing on whether there should be another electoral system or which other system should replace first-past-the-post, while a few others indicated support for a more general engagement on different electoral systems. A few even expressed support for the government to skip public engagement and simply decide on another electoral system. For those who supported further public engagement, suggested qualities included making sure it is non-partisan, high-profile, with multiple sessions in communities, and that there be a public report on what was heard.

Desire to change to a different electoral system

A very large number of respondents stated a specific preference for proportional representation, with several supporting a “mixed-member proportional” system. A very



large number of respondents expressed support for general system reform or finding a best alternative to the current first-past-the-post system. A moderate number suggested using ranked or preferential ballots and a few others suggested using single-transferable voting. Several respondents thought the commission should develop a tailored or made-in-Yukon electoral system. A large number of survey respondents spoke to another area of electoral reform entirely and suggested either considering or going straight ahead with eliminating party politics in Yukon. While the majority of comments favoured electoral system reform, there were a large number of respondents who expressed their lack of support of such reform or their clear support for keeping the current first-past-the-post electoral system.

Underlying principles and values

Among respondents who favoured electoral system reform, a large number of respondents appeared to value the accurate representation of the general vote, wherein every vote counts, there are no “false” majorities, and no impetus for people to vote strategically. A related value appeared to be representative governance, with a fair number of respondents speaking favourably of a greater diversity of people and viewpoints in the Legislative Assembly and better and more representative decision making. Several respondents valued electoral systems that encourage greater cooperation and collaboration among MLAs, with a few respondents supporting systems that allow room for smaller parties. Finally, a few respondents thought it important that a new system be easy to explain and understand.

Among respondents who favoured keeping the current first-past-the-post electoral system, a fair number were opposed to wasting money on investigating or changing the electoral system. Several respondents were unsupportive of other electoral systems, suggesting they lead to minority governments that can face challenges in effective or efficient governance, end up in gridlock, or allow room for fringe parties to emerge. Finally, a few respondents suggested that other electoral systems are too complicated and hard to understand.



Non-survey feedback

With respect to electoral system reform, feedback suggests this topic was also very important among the non-survey respondents. With respect to the role of the commission, feedback gathered by email and in-person meetings suggests interest in a commission that is open, accountable, non-partisan and representative of the broader Yukon community. Some expressed a preference for a citizens' assembly, as they felt it would encourage higher public trust in their recommendations, while others supported an independent commission that could expand beyond their initial mandate if needed. In a similar vein, some thought the commission's final report should reflect Yukoners' views. References to research or public education on different types of electoral systems suggested the commission look to and learn from the experiences of dozens of other countries with proportional representation. Some suggested public education should be the number one priority for the commission, with some feeling it was missing from the initial engagement. Much like the survey respondents, these respondents thought the pros and cons of each electoral system should be identified and that efforts should be taken to be simple, clear and not overwhelm the public. There was also support for further public engagement, with the stipulation that it include public education. In terms of a desire to change to another system, some wanted to explore "mixed member proportional," "single transferable vote," "rural-urban proportional," or a new electoral system of "preferential ridings proportional" put forward by a former Yukon federal returning officer. There was also a suggestion that Yukon might not need to entirely get rid of first-past-the-post, but rather incorporate aspects of alternate systems that best meet and represent the needs of Yukoners through "buffet style" reform. Some also suggested that Yukon is a good size for experimenting with mixed systems and designated seats.

With respect to the underlying principles and values, there was a widely shared value of having an electoral system where everyone has a voice and direct representation, there are no "false majorities," and outcomes are fair and inclusive of everyone. There was also a suggestion that a more representative and inclusive electoral system and legislature will not only increase voter turnout but also lead to a more generally fair and equitable society.



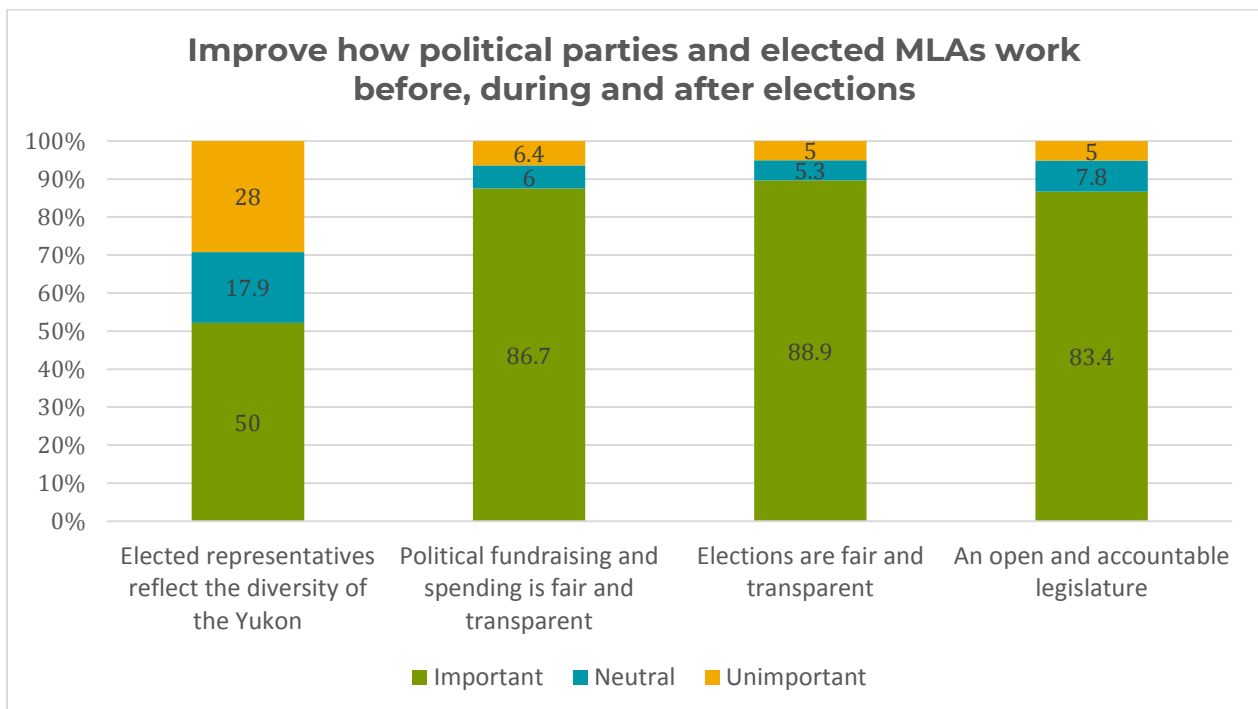
2. Political parties and elected officials

There are many rules about what political parties and elected officials (Members of the Yukon Legislative Assembly) can and cannot do before, during and after elections.

These rules include how political parties raise and use campaign funds, how elections are run, the roles and responsibilities of elected MLAs, and the rules of the Yukon Legislative Assembly where MLAs work and make decisions.

We will ask the Commission on Electoral Reform to suggest ways to improve how political parties and elected MLAs work before, during and after elections.

To help guide the work of the commission, we asked you how important it is to you that the commission focus on certain topics. Among survey respondents, there was higher agreement that it was important or very important for the commission to focus on ensuring “elections are fair and transparent” (89%), “political fundraising and spending is fair and transparent” (87%), and that Yukon has “an open and accountable legislature” (83%). In fact, 5 in 6 respondents agreed these topics were very important; the highest level of agreement across all survey topics. By contrast, there was much lower agreement on the importance of ensuring “elected representatives reflect the diversity of the Yukon” (50%).



Key themes

Thematic analysis of the written survey comments identified a clear sentiment that adversarial politics and partisanship comes at the expense of the public good, and that respondents would prefer to see elected representatives be honest, respectful and work together in the best interest of all Yukoners.

Elections are fair and transparent

Several respondents expressed an interest in measures to prevent activities that would unduly influence or mislead the public, such as rules for when and how to report opinion poll results, rules for media coverage and rules for advertising. Several respondents spoke to the importance of honest and truthful representation of information, with a few suggesting a role for independent fact-checking, and a few others preferring that individual candidates or parties take more responsibility. Other suggestions included harsher penalties for candidates or MLAs involved with vote-fixing or voter fraud.

Political fundraising and spending is fair and transparent

While a few respondents supported placing limits on corporate and union donations, a large number of respondents suggested banning corporate and union donations altogether. Several respondents expressed concern about the dilution of citizens' voices or the potential influence of extra-territorial entities such as companies, associations or unions. Relatedly, several respondents recommended rules to prevent or require public disclosure of lobbying activities. Several respondents supported placing limits on donations from private individuals, with a few respondents wishing to restrict donations to Yukon residents only. A fair number of survey respondents suggested all political contributions or funding sources be publicly disclosed or disclosed in a timelier manner. Several respondents eschewed traditional political party fundraising and expressed an interest in all political parties or candidates receiving equal funding or subsidies from a public fund for elections. Other suggestions included supports for independent candidates that do not have access to party funding, supports for lower-income candidates, and rules and penalties for the illegal misuse of funds.



An open and accountable legislature

A very large number of survey respondents expressed support for a less adversarial and partisan legislature where elected officials work together more collaboratively and cooperatively for the good of all Yukoners. A moderate number of respondents considered partisanship to come at the expense of real work, governance, or the best public policy for Yukon. There were many suggestions to improve the work of elected officials in the Legislative Assembly. More constructive and meaningful dialogue or debate during Question Period was raised by a fair number of respondents, with several respondents suggesting rules or penalties for MLAs who do not honestly answer questions or are rude or disrespectful. Several respondents also suggested abolishing “whipped” voting or partisan voting blocks, in part due to a perception that it prevents MLAs from representing their constituents’ interests. Several respondents suggested making the Legislative Assembly less oppositional by changing the name of the “official opposition” or adopting a circular seating design, and several wanted to see engagement across partisan lines and with the public when decisions are made. Suggestions included more legislative committee work and public input on legislative votes.

Accountability was another key theme. Several respondents wanted more accountability for election promises and several raised the concept of recall legislation or other means to remove MLAs who break promises or lose public confidence. The following were also suggested by a few respondents each: financial accountability, ministerial accountability, rules around floor-crossing, and rules or an MLA code of ethics. There were also several suggestions regarding legislative transparency, including: using plain language the public can understand, improving access to information, keeping the public informed of government decisions, and fact-checking statements made in the Legislative Assembly.

Elected representatives reflect the diversity of Yukon

While there was lower overall agreement that elected representatives reflecting the diversity of Yukon was a topic of importance, a fair number of survey respondents considered diverse candidates and elected officials to be important for representing the



needs of the public. Women, minorities and those with lower incomes were referenced as groups that should be represented in politics. A permanent First Nations seat in the legislature was also suggested. With respect to supports for encouraging diversity, a few respondents supported education and minimizing financial barriers, while several others either did not consider diversity to be a priority or did not support minimizing financial barriers through the use of campaign funds for home or healthcare expenses.

Other priorities

A few respondents indicated that the commission should not focus on improving how political parties and elected MLAs work, as bodies such as Elections Yukon and the Standing Committee on Elections, Rules and Procedures could take on this work while the commission focuses on other priorities.

Non-survey feedback

Yukoners who provided their input by email or at in-person meetings appeared to consider the topic of improving how political parties and elected MLAs work less of a priority than survey respondents, though there was a shared sentiment that elected officials should work more cooperatively and respectfully in the legislature. Specific suggestions also included having designated seats for women and youth in the Legislative Assembly and establishing a watchdog role to ensure constitutionally protected Yukon First Nations treaties are not misrepresented by political parties or the Government of Yukon.

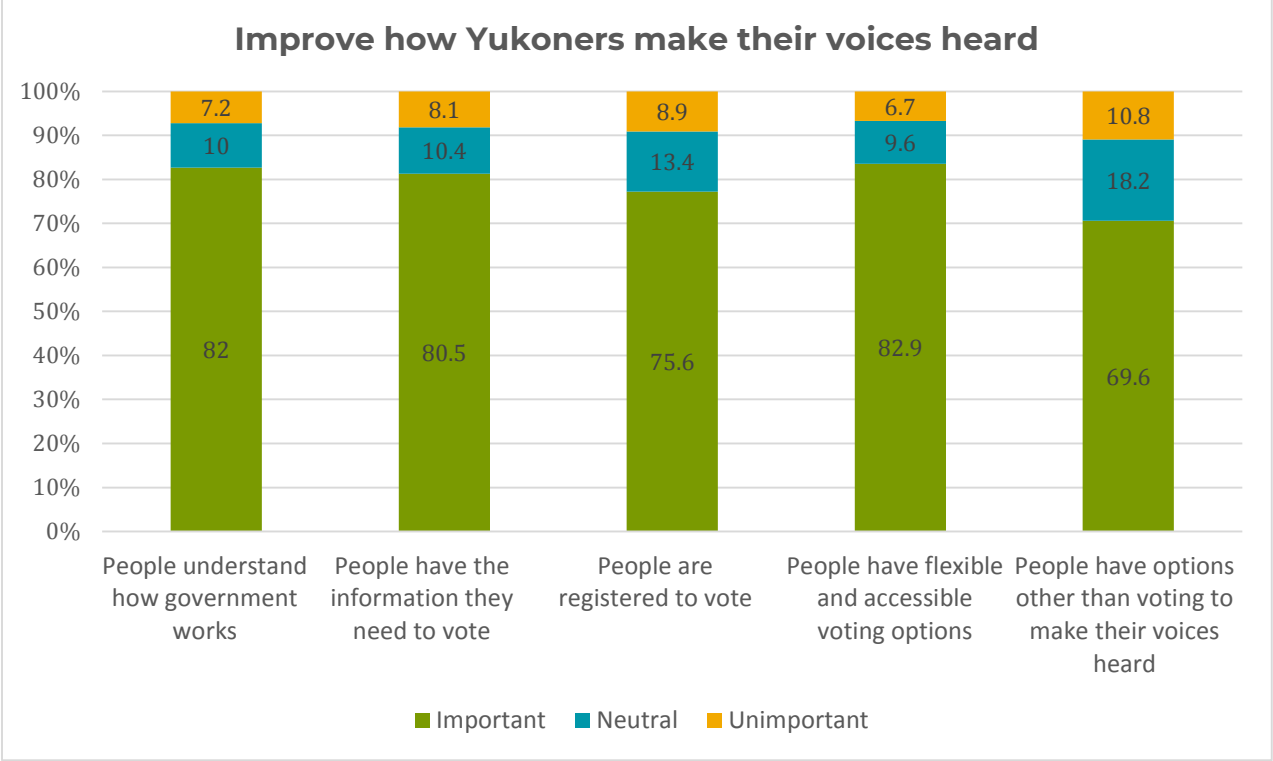
3. Making your voice heard

As we said in the survey, there are many ways for Yukoners to participate in our democracy and make our voices heard. One of the most direct and important ways is voting in territorial elections. Other ways include speaking to an elected official, participating in public engagements or voting on a specific question in a referendum.

We will ask the Commission on Electoral Reform to suggest ways to improve how Yukoners make their voices heard.



To help guide the work of the commission, we asked you how important it is to you that the commission focus on certain topics. Among survey respondents there was higher agreement that it was important or very important for the commission to ensure people “have flexible and accessible voting options” (83%), “understand how government works” (82%) and “have the information they need to vote” (81%). There was slightly lower agreement that the commission ensure “people are registered to vote” (76%) or that “people have options other than voting to make their voices heard” (70%).



Key themes

There was a sentiment in favour of improving how Yukoners make their voices heard and an acknowledgement that elected officials and government need to listen in order for such changes to make a difference.

People have flexible and accessible voting options

While a few respondents supported online voting as a means of encouraging turnout, several others indicated opposition to electronic or online voting options due in part to concerns about potential technological glitches or voter fraud. Suggestions to improve



the accessibility of voting included provision of childcare and free public transit on polling days, having more than one polling day, and generally making voting faster and easier for people.

People understand how government works

Several respondents indicated support for civic education and a few respondents suggested that improving general education would also improve the health of our democracy. Suggestions reflected support for civic education that is unbiased, explains the responsibilities of different orders of government, and explains how voting works and why it matters.

People have the information they need to vote

A moderate number of respondents indicated support for easily accessible information on candidates, political parties, or party platforms. Several respondents suggested this information be centralized in one place or website and a few suggested that there be all candidates' meetings in each riding. A few respondents expressed a desire for objective or non-partisan information. An underlying value appears to be one of informed choice, particularly for people with busy lives and taking into account all levels of education and access to information.

People are registered to vote

Responses indicate a tension between protecting against voter fraud and increasing the accessibility of our voting system. Several respondents suggested that valid government identification be required to vote, while several others supported reasonable measures to improve the accessibility of voter registration, particularly for groups such as students, seniors, people living off-grid, and people without a fixed address. This tension was also evident between a few respondents who want to eliminate vouching and a few who want to continue to allow it. With respect to voter turnout, there were several respondents interested in introducing mandatory voting and a few interested in improving youth voter turnout. There was no consensus in favour of lowering or maintaining the voting age, with a few respondents both for and



against. Other suggestions included incentives to encourage turnout and establishing a permanent voters list.

People have options other than voting to make their voices heard

A fair number of respondents clearly indicated an interest in more regular contact and dialogue with their elected representatives, whether it be through town halls, face-to-face or community meetings, or having a local constituency office. In the same vein, a few respondents also suggested more personal communications from and written by MLAs, such as emails or personal letters of response. There was also interest in meaningful public engagement, with a fair number of respondents referencing interest in more government surveys, online fora, better engagement with rural communities and the importance of reporting back on engagement findings. Opportunities for direct democracy or contributions to decision-making was also raised; a fair number of respondents suggested holding referenda on issues of public importance and a few wanted the public to be able to initiate a referendum through a public petition. Other suggestions included avenues for public input in the Legislative Assembly, such as a public liaison officer to raise concerns on behalf of citizens or options for providing feedback on votes taking place in the legislature (e.g., laws or budgets).

Other priorities

Several respondents indicated the importance of listening to specific or marginalized groups such as Yukon First Nations, rural Yukoners, people of colour, queer and trans people, women, and individuals living with disabilities. Alternately, several respondents indicated that existing avenues for making their voices heard are already sufficient.

Non-survey feedback

The topic of people making their voices heard appeared to be a higher priority among Yukoners who provide their input by email or at in-person meetings than among survey respondents, with a specific emphasis on supports for people who may face barriers or accessibility issues.



Identification was a central theme, with references to the time and cost of replacing lost or stolen identification, health cards no longer being accepted as identification, and barriers for people who are homeless, precariously housed, living off-grid or otherwise do not have an address or records such as bills that establish their address. There was also a question about whether voter fraud is actually an issue and a supposition that there are no documented cases of people lying to vote in Yukon. Positive mention was made of the letters of attestations available to people without fixed addresses, with a suggestion that this be made an option for everyone who needs one.

Special ballots were also viewed positively, with a suggestion that trained volunteers or workers be available to support people with literacy issues, people living with a physical or intellectual disability and people facing other accessibility barriers. Other specific suggestions included permitting vouching for people who do not live in the same polling division and providing free bus passes or public transit on voting days.

In terms of public education and engagement, there was a recognition that people often have urgent realities they need to focus on in their lives and the last thing they think about is when, where or for whom to vote. Some people may also not see a reason to vote. As such, there were suggestions that the government looks at where people are coming from and what would make civic engagement as a whole more accessible – such as housing and healthcare.



Demographics

Comparing the demographics of survey respondents with Yukon population data reveals that the survey respondents are not fully reflective of the broader Yukon public. For example, survey respondents were slightly more likely to be older than the general population; women survey respondents were somewhat underrepresented compared to men respondents; and survey respondents were overall less likely than the general population to live in a Yukon community outside of Whitehorse. In other words, the survey respondents skew towards slightly older and “urban” and are a little more likely to be men.

No demographic information was collected for non-survey feedback collected through emails and in-person meetings.

| <i>Characteristic</i> | <i>Category</i> | <i>Survey n(%)</i> | <i>Yukon (%)*</i> | <i>Diff (%)</i> |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| <i>Age</i> | 18 to 29 years old | 89 (10.6%) | 7262 (17.9%)** | -7.3 |
| | 30 to 39 years old | 203 (24.3%) | 6760 (16.7%) | +7.6 |
| | 40 to 49 years old | 148 (17.7%) | 5542(13.7%) | +4 |
| | 50 to 59 years old | 140 (16.7%) | 6091 (15%) | +1.7 |
| | 60 to 64 years old | 74 (8.9%) | 2933 (7.2%) | +1.7 |
| | 65 years or older | 122 (14.6%) | 5217 (12.9%) | +1.7 |
| | Prefer not to say | 60 (7.2%) | - | - |
| <i>Gender</i> | Women | 348 (41.6%) | 19,851 (49%) | -7.4 |
| | Men | 388 (46.4%) | 20,632 (51%) | -4.6 |
| | Trans, Two-Spirit, non-conforming | 9 (1.1%) | - | - |
| | Prefer not to say | 91 (10.9%) | - | - |
| <i>Residency</i> | Whitehorse area | 655 (78.3%) | 31527 (77.9%) | +0.4 |
| | Communities | 128 (15.3%) | 8956 (22.1%) | -6.8 |
| | Prefer not to say /other | 53 (6.4%) | - | - |

* Yukon Bureau of Statistics' Population Report - Second Quarter 2018.

** Population age 15 to 29.

