

Transcript – MLA Panel Discussion (featuring Lane Tredger and John Streicker)

(Sara McPhee-Knowles)

So, for our panel this evening, I have Lane Tredger sitting next to me. Lane is the MLA for Whitehorse Center, and member of the Yukon NDP. We also have John Streicker that you heard from this morning, who is the MLA from Mount Lorne-Southern Lakes and a member of the Liberal Party.

And the structure of what we're going to do today is talk kind of more generally about their experiences as members of the Legislative Assembly and what that's like. And the reason for wanting to do this panel and why Max talked about those four roles that an MLA plays in his presentation earlier today was to see how these are connected and to see what it's like. I think it's a role that's often kind of misunderstood and a very multifaceted role, so, I wanted you to hear about that from folks who are doing it, and also, just to get that further understanding of the way that different systems work, sometimes MLAs play different roles or the role of an MLA might change or shift, so, it's part of building that understanding.

So, we'll go through a couple of questions for our panelists to answer in turn, and then we'll have time for an open Q & A. If anybody has a question and they're less comfortable putting up their hand and asking with a microphone, you are also, welcome to pass a question to Christy, written down, if you would like. But we are hoping folks can build up their presentation skills as part of this process.

Okay, that's enough, about me talking.

So, my first question, and I'll send it over to John first, is, really about why you chose to run for public office and, when you were first elected, how did it feel when you saw those results come in?

(John Streicker)

Hi, everybody. Thank you, Sarah for dinner, thanks, Ali. Hi again.

Why did I run the first time? Well you should know that I ran twice and lost twice before I was elected. If you go back before those times of running, what was it that motivated me to get involved in politics? I guess it was a couple of things. One, there was a moment in time I was, I'm a scientist and I work on climate change and I had been invited to give a series of lectures in the United States, and I was speaking at a university for some keynote address, and that day the, at that point the American Vice president had gotten on the radio and said, well yes, scientists now know that climate change exists, but they don't know what's causing it. And it was like, Oh no, we do, we do know, and I felt that in that moment people weren't being fairly informed, and then I got worried that it could undermine democracy if people don't have fair information. How could they make good decisions, so, I started thinking about, well, maybe I should do more than be a scientist. Maybe I should try to become part of the decision making side of things, to become an elected official.

And I guess the other reason for me is that my mom always, well demonstrate it to us, but also, encouraged us to help create the community which we wish to live in. So, if you if you want to make a difference then contribute. That could be volunteering, that could be putting your name forward for a citizens assembly. That could be a whole range of reasons. I don't think it has to be running for political

office but it's certainly lined up well with running for political office and then just very quickly, you asked, what did it feel like?

We always have a range of emotions like the first one is you feel like an impostor, so, you are given this really big task, and you, in my first instance, I ran against a capable MLA, Kevin Barr, and he and won by some ridiculously slim number of votes. And then you're, you feel like, is this even fair? And the third candidate was, the other person, there were three candidates in in the riding in 2016, and I thought all of them would have made great MLA's. And you just you think that, oh, they all had something, we all had something to contribute. So, there's, you go through a range of emotions all the time but that's probably true every day, so, it's a very taxing job. You are always asked to, if you walk down to the drug store or the grocery store, you'll be in a conversation about potential flooding or whatever the issue is, there'll be 1000 issues that we all get faced with all the time. And so, it's a very, my wife is a nurse, which is one of the most respected professions out there and I'm a politician, which was, is one of the least respected.

But in truth, and some of you may be public servants, you will know that it is a service that you have this opportunity to help make a difference, and you try your hardest. Do your best to contribute to make this place a better place in this in our setting for Yukoners and you, you do what you can and you hope that you, and you will never know until later on, because it's got to be in posterity that you look back at your term in office to see what you, how you contribute, sorry, I'm pointing to you, Tony, but you would then think about what that looks like in posterity. So, you, you don't even know whether you've done well, sometimes and you just have to keep putting your best foot forward.

(Lane Tredger)

That's a little hard to follow. It's actually one of my earlier memories of politics is listening to John on the radio, in the leadership, or the candidate debate for the federal party. When I was out at my parents cabin with my parents listening to a radio wired through the chimney, and we had to turn off all the lights because at the time of the lights work to them, the radio didn't, so, we were sitting in the dark, and I remember listening to John talk.

Anyway, I got into politics, so, I'm, my background is I'm I was a speech, I'm treated as a speech therapist or a speech language pathologist and I worked with a lot of families, of young kids and a lot of those families from lots of different backgrounds, but a lot of those families were really struggling with different things. And I had often, an experience I had often is I'd call a family and say, hey, do you want do some speech therapy this week and then say yeah, but it's not a good week. And I'd talk to them a little more and realize it's because they couldn't, they needed to find a place to live that month or they needed to put food on their table that week. And those were problems

I could not help with as a speech therapist. And so, I was getting more and more frustrated that people were facing these problems that I didn't have any mechanism to try and fix. And my dad actually was an MLA before me. And so, he started calling me and saying, hey, I think you should run for office, and I was like, that's crazy, I'm not doing that. And then he'd call me back the next week. like I would never have the conversation and say, hey, I think you should run for office and I'd say no, we talked about this last week, I'm not doing that. And about time four that he asked me, it started to sound a little less crazy and so, ...

I guess I've had this experience of, I for a long time trying to convince the government to do things differently, so, I'd write letters and I would campaign and I was on boards of nonprofits that did advocacy, and I started to think like, well, maybe I could just be part of the group of people making the decisions instead of trying to convince them to do something different. I could go there and be one and then make those different decisions.

So, that's sort of how I got there. It's a hard question of like what I thought when I first got elected, because it was such a blur, it was just such a blur. I just remember my, like, my phone blowing up all of a sudden, like as it got announced, and then, like every person I need texted me and like it was, it was wild. It was a wild evening and week and time and it hasn't really stopped. But yeah, so, this it was a very, very surreal experience to get elected and I still feel like I'm just sometimes I wake up and think, wow, that that is what I do.

(Sara McPhee-Knowles)

Thank you both so, much. So, you both touched on this a bit, the blur that hasn't stopped in the grocery store conversations. I was a bureaucrat before I moved to Yukon ...

(John Streicker)

Public servant, public servant.

(Sara McPhee-Knowles)

Public servant in policy, before I moved up to the university, I remember running into my minister at the time at Superstore and you have this like, Buddy with the cart pulled up like doing a speed run through the produce section so, that nobody would stop him to be like, hey, I have a problem with this speed zone out in front of my house, I worked for highways and public works. So, I think that's a great lead into kind of this next question of like what is the typical day in the life of an MLA like? And what are some kind of seasons and shifts in the role?

(Lane Tredger)

Sure, I can start. I'm going to have a very different answer, I think than John, because I think the job of being an MLA who's in government versus job of being opposition are actually really different jobs in a lot of ways.

But I just want to comment on the grocery store thing briefly because I actually, I really love that, I really love running into people wherever I go, who have, are excited about things happening in the Yukon and want to talk about them. A skill I have developed that I did not have when I first got elected is setting boundaries around when to have conversations, so, I love it when people approach me and sometimes I say I really want to talk about this, can you call me tomorrow? Here's my number or I can give you a call tomorrow. So, I if you're ever elected, I think that's a really important thing to be able to say, not actually at the bar at 10:00.

Anyway, so, I again, even within the opposition role, I often feel like there's two separate jobs, and one is when the legislature is sitting and one is when it's not, because when the ledge is sitting, it's pretty consuming. So, my day looks like I get to work at around 8:00 or 8:00 trying to check in on what's been,

what happened overnight. Our team meets or at about 8:30, and we figure out what's going to happen for the day and start, get started on that. At 9:45 I meet with John and the other house, the House leader for the Yukon NDP, so, one representative from each party meets and says this is what's going to, find out what's going to happen for the day, like what bill we're going to talk about or what motion is going to come up.

So, then we spend the rest of the morning getting ready for that and then at 1:00, so, sorry, at 12:00, this is our caucus is what we do at 12:00, we eat our lunches and we practice our speeches about what's going to happen for the rest of the day, particularly, we practice our questions from question period because those are sort of the most high intensity, I guess. And then 1:00 we go in and we're in until 5:30 and then starts again the next day. So, that's what my day looks like during session.

Um outside of session, it's a lot more varied and I actually really love the work of the legislature better. This is my preference, is I spend a lot of my time trying to connect with people because what I find is that, I wish everyone would come to me all the time and a lot of people don't know that they can do that with their MLA. And I find often I'll go to a social event maybe, and meet someone, and they'll meet me, and then the next week they'll call me and say, actually, I've got this problem I need some help with. So, I think it's so, important to make those connections, especially in person, connections with people in my riding, but also, across the Yukon, so, that they call me when they have a problem.

And then I'm also,, I have critic portfolio, so, I like some of mine are environment and housing are two of my big ones. So, then I'm also, meeting with people who know things about those fields so, that I can learn what kind of things should I be advocating for, what things are working, what things aren't. So, that's ah, to say. Oh, and then the last piece that I should touch on is case work, what I call case work. So, people coming with problems and then we figure out what we can do for them. So, maybe it's writing the Minister, maybe it's connecting them with something. Yeah, those that's the broad picture of what I do in a day.

(John Streicker)

I think that Lane, I agree with Lane that it there's a season when we're in session. So, that's four months of the year and it has been variable in the past but basically it is March, April, October, November. So, in session, by the way, my home is in Judas Creek, but I stay, my mother-in-law lives in town and I, well, it's our house, but we call it my mom's, my mother-in-law's place, and we used to rent out the basement. Now I'm the renter in the basement. So, during the week, I'm usually in town.

So, in session it's very similar, although we don't know what questions are coming in question period. We try to take guesses at it, but we, and there's a rule that you have to, you can't get texts from someone with answers. So, what that means is you have to carry down binders and I have 4 portfolios plus house leader. So, I have to carry down 4 binders, big binders every day, so, I've got a log carrier, and I carry them down each day. And then if a question comes, you madly try to get into the binder to that place and often I don't get there in time. I have to give the first answer and then by the time I get the supplementary question ... anyway, it's a lot of, it's a pressure cooker during session.

Outside of session, it's a really varied job. You, all of us will have MLA work, constituency work. I had litter pickup in Tagish today, so, in between this morning and this afternoon that's, that was my job and. And

we all get case works, so, by, caseworks that come from colleagues, from opposition colleagues are sort of more formal typically, but we will even case work like if I have a question that's a health question, I will case work it to the Minister of Health so, that there's an official record if it. So, that's just a way of accountability. And so, the public servants have to do a lot of work around those case works and in session they do a lot of work, and they don't get at the other work that they're trying to do for Yukoners typically.

And then when we're out of session, so, last week I chaired meetings of Ministers of Culture and Heritage from across Canada, came here to the Yukon and we got to host, that's, was terrific. I invited Annie to come to the evening, but I think she was up in Old Crow. And I, and on Monday morning, I'm heading down to Watson Lake. So, we go to communities and have meetings with, so, it will be with the Liard First Nation and with the town of Watson Lake to talk about firewood and tourism and a range of issues.

And so, it could be pretty varied every day. It's never dull and even, it there is a difference if you're a minister, but there's always, so, the opposition members are critics of certain, and they, and you, the NDP, would carry even more portfolios per person because they have three members and they're going to cover off all those portfolios. So, everyone is busy. It's not, it's never not busy. And the critical role is the, in our system it's an honorable role like you, the job is to hold governments to account.

And, like Kate talked about it this morning about the difference between a majority government and minority government. There's a couple other things I should point out. The Yukon is the smallest of Canada's jurisdictions, which are partisan. And there's a reason for partisan because in an election you get to try and pick what direction the territory should go. If you don't have parties, you're not doing that, so, that's an advantage of the partisan system. The disadvantage is sometimes it sets it up to be very adversarial or lacking respect.

I would say that is not generally, the case here in the Yukon. That in most instances, it is pretty respectful. Certainly it's more respectful than the BC Legislative Assembly or Alberta or Saskatchewan. And it's certainly more respectful than the federal parliament. But it doesn't mean that it's always respectful, right? There are dates when, and this is not meant towards any, everyone in the assembly has the discretion to do their work respectfully and everyone has a discretion to do it less so,. And there are days when it, and there are individuals who are more prone to being less respectful and that makes it very hard.

And especially if you think about this like we're trying to take decisions, you know, like what might be some of the most important things that happen for the territory and yet we're, and in fact we would say that if you were a grade five class or a grade three class or grade eight class, you should never bully, but somehow in the Assembly, we still allow that to happen. And it's hard because if you challenge that, then it's you, the argument is that you're just being partisan. So, it's very difficult, like no one reports that the media never reports on someone asked a respectful question or someone gave a respectful answer. They don't report that, so, all you are here is where there is disrespect or challenge. Where, it's tough so,, but the Yukon is better than other assemblies, and anyway I'll stop there and drifting off. It's busy. Always.

(Sara McPhee-Knowles)

And I think that raises a great point. You mentioned accountability and question period. Everything is recorded enhancer which is you can find on the yukonassembly.ca, and so, everything that takes place in the legislature is documented and that's part of that accountability, and you can listen in on the radio, Tony mentioned the radio earlier. There's also, those recordings are available, so, if there are times at which you were like ohh I'd I missed this or I didn't hear what happened that there is that record that's permanent, which is helpful to mention. So, my next question would be, what do you wish people better understood about the role of an MLA? Maybe we'll go to John first quickly.

(John Streicker)

Man, I wish that we could let a lot of people job shadow to come in and see what it's like. You'd be amazed how quickly people would go, wow okay, t's really there's a lot of work going on all the time and it's hectic.

What do I wish people knew? I think people know that it's busy, I think the thing that I would say that seems to be changing in my mind is around social media these days and social media has been great for some things, but for others not so, much. And one of the things that's happened with it is, it's hurt our media first of all because it puts so, much pressure on the media to move fast. And they can't do in depth what they used to have the ability to do, and that makes it so, that headlines count more and reporting counts less. And that isn't healthy.

And another thing that tends to happen is that it draws out voices that are kind of faceless. So, that sometimes people will criticize, but it's not them who are there. That they're, they keep it a letter in the paper, often you sign your name, do you know what I mean? So, there's a link back and when you don't have that link, sometimes people can be unkind. And I don't think that's healthy for our democracies generally. And I think again, it's better here in the Yukon than it is in other places, but that doesn't mean that it isn't, that there are problems. So, there are a lot of challenges.

The other thing I would say is that everyone that I've met and everyone that put their name forward to run for politics and everyone that I've seen that has gotten elected, even people who I would consider to be career politicians, they have come with honorable intentions. They want to improve the Yukon. They have a vision for what that looks like, that that might disagree with mine or disagree with Lanes. And that's OK because, my sense is that we're stronger when we have a range of perspectives that come forward. But I think sometimes people mistake those differences for meaning that those people don't care, and in my experience, most people that run for politics at whatever level that is, really absolutely care, and we should be treating them with a lot of thanks for putting the names forward. not unlike you coming forward for a citizens assembly, right. You're, you put yourself forward. You you're stepping into a role. And I hope that what people see is that intention.

(Lane Tredger)

I wish that more people knew that their MLA is a resource for them. I wish that more people knew that when they're having a problem, they can go to their MLA. And sometimes people bring me problems that aren't really in my jurisdiction, they're something that the federal government is responsible for, the municipal government is responsible for, but I can tell them that. Like I can say, actually, this is the city and this is how you go to the city and this is who you should e-mail or vice versa or same with the federal

government. So, yeah, that's what I wish is that more people knew that their MLA really works for them and is available to them or should be available to them. Yeah, that's mine.

I think one, one note, I want to add on the social media pieces, I think there's pros and cons like there's things I actually really like about social media in the Yukon and then one is that it's very hard, I think it's a challenge for absolutely everybody, is you live in a bubble that has a lot of people who think the same things as you. And what I one of the things I love about social media is getting to see views of people who I might not be friends with, or I might not have in my everyday circles, but I still really want to hear what they have to say and so, I can like, go on the Yukon helpers network and see, hey, there's a lot of people struggling with this issue and I hadn't heard about it from them directly, but I can reach out to them or I can say, hey, that seems like this is a problem we should be thinking about.

(Sara McPhee-Knowles)

That's great. And you both touched on the importance of that diversity of perspectives and sources of information and how we find out about things which I think is really helpful. What do you find, I guess most rewarding about your role and you've talked some about challenges, but if there are other challenges you'd like to add that would also, be helpful.

(Lane Tredger)

So, there is, yeah, there's lots of things that are both rewarding and challenging. I mean some of, and I think we'll probably have different experiences of this being in opposition and government, but you know we, I really feel that because I and two other people from the NDP got elected and we were able to make changes happen through the, that I am incredibly proud of and I hear from people all the time that are making a difference in their lives and that, that is making me teary thinking about it to be honest. Just because I'm just really, really proud of some of the things that are different in the Yukon that were different a year ago or three years ago, that I really believe have made a lot of people's lives a lot better and that's, that is a reward that is hard to beat.

I also,, sometimes there's really small wins like someone came to me because they lived in Yukon housing and their toilet had been broken for two weeks and no one had fixed it and I was able to get them in touch with the minister, who made sure that their toilet got fixed and like that sounds little, but it was really big for that person and it's really, that's really rewarding to you.

I also,, I just really love meeting and talking to people. And sometimes people ask me like, well, what skills do you need to be a politician? And the truth is, there are so, many ways to be a politician and I'm sure if you asked everyone else in the legislature, you'd get 17 other ways that peoples days look and the things they do. But I think that, if you don't like talking to people, you probably shouldn't be a politician because it's so, much about connecting with people, and I, it is really quite amazing the stories people will tell you when you knock on their doors or when you meet them at the market or wherever it is you meet people. Like, they'll tell you some pretty personal stories and pretty meaningful stories to them. And that is really a privilege to get to hear those. In terms of challenges actually, do you want to do your pro's first and then I'll come back to challenges.

(John Streicker)

Sure, sure. I think for me the most rewarding things are the moments when you realize that you help someone. So, and it can be a range of things like it can be something big like land use planning or climate change strategy or the health authority I think was a big thing, but I but the ones that you, that resonate with you is when they're very personal.

Like so, I got a letter, it was a handwritten letter from an 8 year old how her, she had a little tent, like a teepee tent that they'd put up so, that she could wait for the school bus and then Atco would come through or Northwestel, I'm not sure which, but it taken it down to try and clear underneath the power line and so, she wrote to me as the MLA. So, we went and we took a machete and we took some old canvas off of my old wall tent and we built her a tent that day and we talked about democracy and about writing letters to your MLA, about trying to make a difference and I'm hopeful now for Danielle that she will think about, you know, how she can contribute to her world. So, those moments just feel so, rewarding when you recognize that you were able to help and some of the files that we work on just go on forever. Like they never end and so, they're hard because you don't get that rewarding finish line. So, even though you have all of this responsibility in the role as Minister, the ones that most resonate with you are the are the one-on-one individual things that make a difference.

(Lane Tredger)

In terms of challenges, I mean one is when you can't change something. So, like as an opposition, I can advocate for things to be changed, but ultimately I cannot make the government do something different. And sometimes people come to me and they have really heartbreaking situations going on and I have I'm not able to convince the government to make the change that would help them, or that I believe would help them. I'm sure there's lots of reasons for that, so, that's really hard.

I find you're never going to make everybody happy and that's OK, and I've gotten more comfortable with that and I've gotten more comfortable. But as you have to be comfortable knowing that people are gonna be mad about some of the choices you make. Gratefully like that, they're absolutely entitled to those opinions, but I don't always find that comfortable. I don't, I would like to make, everybody happy, and that's not gonna happen.

I had one more that is slipping my mind. Oh, I think this is a, this is something that can be good and bad about the job. There really isn't a job description beyond show up to the legislature and represent your constituents and people take the jobs in lots of different directions, which is really cool, but sometimes it, especially when I was starting, I felt pretty like, OK, so, I'm here. Like, what, what do I do next? And. That can be pretty overwhelming at sometimes, because it's really up to you to choose which pieces of the enormous world to tackle, and you can't do them all so, that that can be hard sometimes.

(John Streicker)

Just on the challenge side, I'm going to share one. The hardest thing that we ever had to do was Covid, that was by far the hardest thing, and it was, no one expected. Like if you, that that first week we cancelled the Arctic Winter Games, I had young athletes coming up to me just talking about how I, how we have massively overreacted and how we taken away this huge opportunity for them and then within a week everyone understood how big a risk it actually was. So, that changed, but it didn't take away from the hard choices that were in front of us.

And usually government is very methodical in making decisions because you get burned if you make mistakes. People will tell you you've made them if you make those mistakes and they will not always be kind. So, you, you work really hard to try and make sure that you're very diligent about the choices. During COVID we couldn't be. We didn't have years of data to rely on to try and take choices. And so, there were hard choices we were forced to make, and you may know, or you may not know, but two weeks ago, someone decided to vandalize my home out at Marsh Lake and they included my wife in this somehow, which was absolutely awful.

And you never want anything like that, but if you want to know the truth, the one of the hardest things for us was the decisions around, because we're faced with a choice to try and decide, to put our healthcare system at risk or to protect our healthcare system, to take away personal freedoms, or to maintain those personal freedoms. Those are hard choices. And you knew in that moment that no matter what you did, you were putting people at risk and you were going to hurt someone and you couldn't make the choice without harming someone. And it wasn't just that they disliked it, it was really that there was tangible harm that was coming to them, and hardship and you ... no manual for the job. You come into the job and you hope you will make lives better. And when you see that some of your choices are going to hurt people, you, it really hits you hard.

So, those are the things that are incredibly challenging and you go home and you talk it over with whoever your significant other is to try, and colleagues and you and you discuss it and you try and talk it through, but it never the heartache of it never goes away. So, it's almost the flip side of those amazing rewards is those amazing challenges.

(Sara McPhee-Knowles)

Okay, thank you both very much. I think now just in the interest of time, I would like to open it to questions and I'll circulate and come back as much as possible. So, you have a mic and, are, is there anyone who would like to take the first crack? Preferably someone who hasn't asked a question yet today, Kevin.

(Member)

So, if there was a, for both you, if there was one thing, one barrier, you could remove that we're giving you, that you think would make it easier for you to do the job you think you need to do, is there anything that jumps out to you guys? Something that you know, I think you know where I'm going with this, that it would make it easier for you and also, another barrier that you could remove that could make it be better for you to help others that are...

(Lane Tredger)

Do you want to go first?

(John Streicker)

Yeah, sure I'll start. Thank you for the question. The thing that I find is that there's a lot of people in the assembly that look like me. I wish that it looked more like you, that it, it's we need more women, we need more First Nations people, we need more people who haven't typically been in there. It is a barrier. In

fact, here's a barrier that you will probably won't thought, but Lane mentioned it earlier. If you're an extrovert, you have a shot at getting elected. If you're an introvert man, that is hard. So, what that means is right away we get rid of about half of those really thoughtful people who you would love to have in an assembly. Because they're not the sort of parson who's comfortable getting up in front of others to talk.

It's not a barrier for me, I've always been, I don't know, for whatever reason my parents made me do public speaking in Grade 4, so, it's OK, but for some people that is super hard and I wish that our assembly was more a reflection of our territory and what that means is that I wish that it had more diversity. So, if you think about it, we're not always as welcoming to women or, more gender diverse folk and it would be great if we could find ways. And one of the one of the barriers, Kevin, around that is when people are kind of shitty** in the assembly, it makes it that those folks who might otherwise choose to put their names forward say I'm not doing that. Why would I do that? So, it, it's about respect and kindness. If we had more respect and kindness, I think more people would feel good about putting their names forward.

(Lane Tredger)

Actually, it's a great answer, and I want to build on it a little. I want to, and this isn't quite an answer to the question, but and I'll get there, I just want to talk really quickly about this, respect in the legislature piece, because I had to think about this a lot. Like what kind of opposition politician do I want to be? And like, when am I, it does not come naturally to me to get up and say I think you're doing something wrong, but that is, I think that's actually sometimes a really important thing to say and you, and I'm sure we'll feel differently about if you go back over different questions I've asked and feel differently about them.

But my, the line I've decided to draw is I think it is OK to say, I think part of my job is holding the government accountable and I think it is OK to say this is not OK. This thing is not OK. This is hurting people and this is how and say that like I think you were doing this wrong. Where I draw the line is I don't think it's ever OK to be rude, like I don't, I just don't think there's ever a need to be rude and that's, you know, it's like I'm sure, again, I'm sure that's that can be a grey area between those two sometimes, but that's what I try to say is like, if I am saying something that I believe is true, then I'm OK saying it. If I feel like it is being rude, then I don't need to say it.

But yeah, so, about this idea of having more diversity in the legislature, I think there are a lot of very specific things that are barriers to people and particularly people who are not like, you know, straight white men. And so, some of those, I would say, one is the way the legislature is run is very formal and uses very like academic language, which I mean my speech therapy background talking like that is not accessible to most people who don't speak English as a first language. That is not accessed, as accessible to really anyone with a with a language disability, that is not accessible to people who don't have a lot of education, like a lot university education or at least a high school education like that. It just makes it harder and harder and harder for people to even just understand what's being said and what the rules of the place are, like learning the rules is like a whole like it was like a year, and I was the house leader before I really understood the rules of who got to talk when and how and what you were allowed to say when, and it's still sometimes a little bit. So, I think the way the legislature is, is this really weird formal situation, which is a barrier.

I also, think there's questions around who gets support to run that make a big difference and who gets voted for. But so, like, there was a really interesting CBC piece of the last federal election that talked about how even when parties ran candidates who weren't, I guess were not straight, white men, they did it in ridings where they were less likely to win. And I think that kind of, there's lots of reasons for that and I mean, I spent a lot of time trying to recruit candidates and something I notice is who thinks they're qualified is a huge piece of it. Like, it's almost like a like a like a comic, like a like a like, a skit, so,metimes because it's like, I'll go to the, like, women who are like, the most qualified people I can imagine, and they'll be like, well, I don't, I don't know if I know enough. And I'm like, are you kidding? Like, if you don't know enough then nobody knows enough. And I'll go to people who I think are like, Oh yeah, I've always thought about that, I'm like, OK, great. But like, it's just like every single time. And so, I think there's a lot of really concrete barriers that so,, like who, who has support, who has networks that can help them campaign, who has mentorship. Who has money? Because like that can be pretty helpful. And then structure of the legislature itself, I think they're all barriers.

(Sara McPhee-Knowles)

Those were, that was a great question. Thank you for that. And those were really fantastic answers. Are there other questions from the assembly members? Then go to Story and then Ryan.

(Member)

So, when we're looking at different electoral systems, how important is it that an MLA represents a specific geographic area? Like some systems might work differently, so, for instance, if I have like a conservative viewpoint, I might not necessarily go to my own MLA in Riverdale South, I might like go, oh, I'll run to the Yukon Party person or I know Lane, so, I'm going to ask them what they think. And, you know, if I have a personal connection or if I know that they're more likely to be responsive, I might go to that perso,n. How important is it that each area has their own MLA representative?

(John Streicker)

I think it's less important today than it used to be. So, first of all, I have, I am sure that there are people from Mount Lorne, Southern lakes, that reach out to Lane. And I know that there are people from downtown Whitehorse that reach out to me. So, it isn't always about representation. But there is, there is representation like Lane has for example, a really strong issue around the downtown school. That is a really pertinent issue for this downtown riding, and I have a need for a well in Mount Lorne, so, there are really specific things that matter and then it matters that you have an MLA who is going to work on those issues and is responsible for them.

The party lines thing is really blurry. We'll have people that reach out to us because we are the government. We'll have people that reach out to opposition because they are the opposition. We'll have people that come from your riding or not. So, I think the things that I would suggest, sorry, I just hit the recording, things are important, one, and we found this in our in our work. There's a big difference, the Yukon is the only jurisdiction where one city has more than half the population of the whole of the territory or province or state. This is the only place. Like, Manitoba's close, but this is way more, so, you've got to figure out how we, how we take care of our communities. That's a big deal, and, but some of that is the Electoral Boundaries Commission, but it does matter what system you recommend or not

because it will have a difference for that. And I think the other thing that is really important is how simple is the system, because the more simple the system is, then the more it, you get that direct Line of connection.

So, here in the Yukon, Lane is Lane, and I am John. I know that people sometimes will refer to me as MLA Streicker or something, but really, I am John. And Lane is Lane, and Ranj is Ranj, and Kate is Kate, Currie is Currie, like it's a small place. We know each other. And that connection is pretty important. It's a challenge as well, of course, right, for, putting up a hoodie doesn't mean no one's going to recognize you in the grocery store. But I think that we all find our ways to have those conversations or to redirect them where we need to. So, I think, direct representation, local representation is important. It's less important than it used to be, say 50 years ago, because nowadays people think of themselves as Yukoners or more broadly.

(Lane Tredger)

I don't know that I have a an answer specifically, but I'll tell you some of the things that I think about when I think about that question. And I think the big one is accountability because I don't really think most people could get reelected without spending time talking to their constituents, and I think that's really important that you're not just accountable to your party or to other politicians. You're accountable to a specific group of people. I don't know if it matters exactly that, so, that's not a geographic question as much as I think it's really important that I can't just like live in a bubble where I read papers and argue about them. I have to go talk to people if I want to get reelected or get elected in the 1st place. I think that's really important.

Yeah. One thing I did want to touch on at some point, and is...

(Sara McPhee-Knowles)

Now is a good time ...

(Lane Tredger)

That .. OK, is a little bit about party systems because we kind of keep talking about it a little bit, and I want to say to start off my bias is that I work in a party system, and so, that is my bias is that that is, sort of, more or less working, you know that's I'm doing my job that way now. So, I think that's a bias to consider and I would like to share with you is some things that I find helpful about that system and not helpful about that system.

The thing I find incredibly helpful about a party system is you have a team, and especially when I compare it to like looking at municipal politics where it's kind of a bunch of individual people, I have a caucus, so, my group of the Yukon NDP, we do not agree on everything, we don't always think the same about things, which is a good thing, and we, sometimes we compromise with each other, sometimes we vote differently on things I don't know if that's happened, but it could. But I know no matter what happens, no matter what kind of terrible a day I have in the legislature, terrible a day I have knocking on a door, but if someone screams at me or whatever, I'm going to come back and have a team who, and we have each other's backs and we have staff who work for us and are working and what I think is important about that team is we all have broadly the same values. We may not exactly agree on every issue, but we

all have a general idea of why we wanted to do this and it's more or less for the same values, which is why we chose that party.

And so, I think that's really important, and then the other piece is accountability. Like when I think about, say again, I'm going to compare it to a City Council like a City Council makes a decision, well, I don't really know like which, of which City Councilor maybe voted for recycling, which might be important to me, or, I don't know a gravel pit, which might be important to me. Like, I don't really know who did what or how, so, it's really hard to know who I want to vote for again. Whereas I think with the party you can say, well, I know that the NDP voted this way and the Yukon Party voted this way and the Liberal voted this way so, if this issue is really important to me, I can count on this party doing that.

There's issues that aren't quite that clear cut, but there I think there's sort of flagship issues for each party and you can say like, I know that this is more or less what they're going to do if I vote for that party. And I think that's really important. So, I think those are two pieces that are strengths of the party system, yeah. Oh, sorry, one more piece of the party system I want to add is it also, means as a party, we're accountable as MLA's to our constituents, but we're also accountable to our party members. So, that is another avenue that people have to influence party politics, is by joining a party and then saying like I want these values represent the legislature so, I can campaign. I can knock on doors or make phone calls or donate or whatever I want to do for the party that represents those values and it's, yeah, I think that's a mechanism that can be useful to people.

(Sara McPhee-Knowles)

I'm going to go, Ryan, for what will be our last question that I'm sure that Kate, sorry Lane and John would be open to answering further follow-ups by e-mail. OK, great.

(John Streicker)

Sure.

(Member)

I don't really have a direct question to them, but we're really obviously, missing a third person, so, I know that like you've already got interested in being part of this process, but it would be possible to still send these same questions to the other house leader and see if they're just going to respond to them.

(Sara McPhee-Knowles)

I can answer that question. I am happy to try and if I get a response, I'll share it with you first.

(John Streicker)

I'll share our thoughts around this like we, today I read Currie's letter to you to see what Currie had to say in response to this, and I tried to reference this a little bit when I got up and gave welcoming remarks. And it really does, I really do believe that there are a range of perspectives. We, Brad, Kate and I were on that Select Committee and we toured the Yukon, we talked to a lot of people. It was, really, we got, we have a lot of agreement with each other and if you read through our report, you will see that that agreement ran all the way to the one last issue and it was around a citizens assembly.

So, and again my perspective is that that means that there are people that didn't believe this was a good process, but it's also, I think fair to understand that it can also, give you an indication that not everyone believes that we should have a different electoral system, right? It's, and, someone said, well, our system hasn't changed in the last century or century in the quarter but it has.

Just around the Second World War or just before it, we agreed that women could vote, so, the system didn't used to allow that. It was still first passed the post, but women didn't have the vote and after the Second World War, First Nations were given the vote. But they weren't before the 60s, I can't remember the date, so, there have been changes to our electoral system, and, but it has served us as well.

So, I think it's good for you to try and think through those perspectives and it's why I still feel like it's really important to hear from the Yukon Party about what they think about things or to give them the chance to give a response, and honestly, I'm not sure whether it would be the House leader. It's just sort of fluke that Lane and I are house leaders, that's not why we're here. We are here because we just got asked and each party sent someone. So, I think you could write to the party and the party could choose to respond or not, but I do think it's important to make that outreach because I think they have a valid perspective and it's good for you to hear it, to help in your deliberation.

(Sara McPhee-Knowles)

Thank you.

And, now that it's 7:30 and it's been a long day, folks have been here for, since breakfast first, I'd really like to thank both Lane and John for sharing your perspectives with us. I think that was really fruitful and valuable discussion and a good insight into what your roles are like and what it's like to do this work, which I think is really important for us to understand.

And I'd also like to once again thank Alli Cat for the catering, which was delicious, the Old Fire Hall for their tech support throughout the day. Michael for running the zooms and the student facilitators and Christie for just helping everything run smoothly and think things went really well, I'm very happy with how our first day has turned out. I also want to give a shout out to the Yukon Legislative Assembly Office staff who've been very, very helpful in ensuring that people's forms are getting processed. They'll hear from Christy who will follow up from you, if we need some follow up from you on that, in terms of making sure that you get your honoraria and get reimbursed for any expenses. So, for tomorrow we'll be back here at 8:45 for breakfast, we'll have a much shorter day. We'll be done by about a quarter after three, so, that folks who came from out of town can get home. Thank you so, much for your time today and for your attention. This has been really fun. I hope you're enjoying yourselves and we'll see you first thing tomorrow morning.