

four Hay River and Inuvik ridings. While some may argue the status quo is justified as it appears to offer historically oppressed Indigenous voices more weight than non-Indigenous voices, the current system fails to protect the democratic rights of the over 4800 Indigenous citizens who live in Yellowknife. This argument also fails to take into account the systems of Indigenous self-government that now exist both in parallel to and in partnership with the GNWT, including the Council of Leaders and the Intergovernmental Council protocol for co-drafting legislation. In other words, offering residents of predominantly Indigenous communities four times the voting power of Yellowknifers in the Assembly does not seem to be either the necessary or appropriate way to ensure their interests are addressed. Democratic principles require boundaries to change, and change will be difficult for everyone, including myself, as I do feel attached to my current constituents. I love the wonderful diversity of YK North neighbourhoods, and would prefer to continue serving all of them.

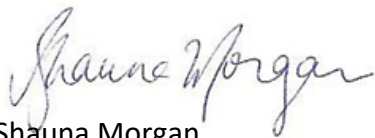
Given that there has been no significant overall population increase in the NWT and no sustainable increase to our economic base, I do not believe that the solution is to increase the number of MLAs. I take to heart many serious concerns around fiscal responsibility, and **would advocate for continuing with 19 MLAs.**

Continuing with 19 MLAs while making changes to boundaries will require a willingness by political representatives to adjust from what we are used to. There has been a tendency for communities and regions to fragment into smaller and smaller groups who each consider themselves to be distinct communities of interest needing distinct representation, but in this age of increased migration and frequent travel within the Territory there is also an opportunity to emphasize linkages and common ties.

I would suggest that one way to ease the transition would be to minimize unnecessary boundary changes and to consider instead grouping non-contiguous neighbourhoods or communities together if the priority is to rebalance population sizes, as long as the Commission's basic principles are upheld (ie. communities of interest, practical access to all parts of the riding). For example, the Commission's proposed Options 1 to 3 mean that most of the Yellowknife ridings have both significant areas added and taken away. In YK North, this would mean removing the downtown and Niven subdivisions while adding School Draw neighbourhoods to Old Town. This essentially creates an entirely new constituency of people, which could cause unnecessary disruption and confusion to both MLAs and residents, given the relationships that have been built.

Some residents have floated the idea of replacing all Yellowknife ridings with one ranked slate of candidates, similar to municipal elections. I can see the appeal of potentially getting a better overall group of representatives for a small city than would be possible with a disconnected series of first-past-the-post races; however there are many significant problems with the idea that have not been addressed. The current system of government requires an individual MLA to advocate on behalf of a particular constituent with a Minister's office—in order to get their specific concerns addressed, for example around income security, healthcare, housing, or student financial assistance, etc. Constituents would presumably continue to receive assistance this way in the rest of the territory, but under a slate system it is unclear how a Yellowknife resident would find an MLA to assist them, or how YK MLAs would balance the constituency work fairly and cost-effectively amongst themselves. It is also unclear whether this would be desired or feasible in Inuvik or Hay River which each currently have two ridings. The slate model could also lead to certain groups of minority neighbourhoods in and around Yellowknife more easily being ignored, if no particular MLA was responsible for them. I am open to further discussions about this idea, but do not believe it is feasible for the current Commission to recommend.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Shauna Morgan', written in a cursive style.

Shauna Morgan
MLA, Yellowknife North