

2021 NWT ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

INTERIM REPORT





INTRODUCTION

The Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly is required to establish an independent Electoral Boundaries Commission after every second general election in the Northwest Territories to review the number, size, and boundaries of the existing electoral districts, or ridings, and thereafter to report to the Legislative Assembly with the Commission's recommendations regarding any proposed changes that ought to be made to the area, boundaries, name, and representation of electoral districts.

In June 2021, the current Legislative Assembly (the 19th Assembly) established the NWT Electoral Boundaries Commission, 2021, appointing Ted Richard, Chairperson, and members Jack Rowe and Glen Abernethy to constitute the Commission. Brief biographies of these three members appear at Appendix 2 of this Interim Report. On completion of its review, the Commission is expected to submit its final report to the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly no later than June 2022.

The *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act* directs the Commission to take specific factors into consideration, e.g., population growth, geographic factors, special circumstances, etc. In addition, the current Legislative Assembly has established guidelines, or criteria, that the Commission is required to take into consideration, e.g., relative parity of voting power, public input, etc. These Guidelines are included in the Commission's Terms of Reference. The Terms of Reference and excerpts from the *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act* are reproduced at Appendix 1.

Within the Terms of Reference, the Commission is directed to prepare an interim report with proposals for electoral boundaries. The interim report is to be widely distributed to the public for review and engagement at public hearings and through written submissions, prior to preparation of the final report. The Commission considers this document to be a discussion paper. Commission members invite the public's attendance (subject to any restrictions which may have to be imposed on account of the continuing pandemic) at any public hearings which are scheduled during January 2022. In particular, the Commission invites written submissions from members of the public which must be received by the Commission's office no later than January 31, 2022. All submissions to the Commission shall be considered public documents.

Written submissions can be mailed to:

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES
COMMISSION

ATTN: Danielle Mager

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Yellowknife, NT
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or emailed to

info@nwtelectoralboundaries.ca

A copy of this interim report can be found on the Commission's website at **nwtelectoralboundaries.ca**.

The 2021 Commission is the fourth electoral boundaries commission to be established since the division of the former Northwest Territories in 1999. Commission members have prepared a historical summary of the reports of the previous Commissions and the subsequent responses by the previous Assemblies. This historical summary can be found in Appendix 3, to hopefully provide further context to the readers of this discussion paper and to assist in this important discussion.



FOR FAIR AND EFFECTIVE REPRESENTATION, HOW MANY MLAS ARE NEEDED?

Currently, there are 19 electoral districts, thus 19 MLAs, and this has been the case since July 1999 (see historical summary at Appendix 3).

Both the *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act* (s. 9 (j)) and the Commission’s Terms of Reference (para 4 (j)) direct this Commission to consider “the minimum and maximum number of members of the Legislative Assembly authorized by the [federal] *Northwest Territories Act*”—yet, currently, there are no minimum or maximum numbers prescribed in that federal statute. Thus, it is for the current Assembly to determine how many electoral districts, and how many MLAs are required to provide each citizen fair and effective representation in the Legislative Assembly.

Paragraph 2 (4) of the Guidelines portion of the Terms of Reference (see Appendix 1) states: “in addition to whatever recommendations the Commission may propose, the Commission shall recommend how the electoral boundaries should be drawn if the Legislative Assembly were to be comprised of a minimum of 19 members”. The Commission understands this wording to mean that within “whatever recommendations”, the Commission is free to recommend a composition of members of the Legislative Assembly of a number less than 19 members. Indeed, this option has been given consideration.

With an NWT population of 45,000 residents, and 19 MLAs, there is, in the Canadian context, a high ratio of MLAs to population, i.e., one MLA per 2372 residents. Although this ratio is comparable to the two sister territories, it is large in comparison to the six smallest (i.e., by population) of Canada’s provinces:

JURISDICTION	POPULATION (2020)	MLAS	RATIO
PEI	159,713	27	1 per 5,915
NB	781,315	49	1 per 15,945
NS	979,115	55	1 per 17,802
Nfld	520,998	40	1 per 13,024
Sask	1,177,884	61	1 per 19,309
Man	1,379,584	57	1 per 24,203
NWT	45,074	19	1 per 2372
Yukon	42,176	19	1 per 2219
Nunavut	39,285	22	1 per 1786

There has been no significant growth in the NWT population. In 2011, the total population was 43,504; today it is at 45,161, an increase of 1657 persons over the past ten years.



Credit: STJ



The role of the legislators is to debate and enact territorial laws, to control public spending, to make decisions regarding public policy, and to give direction to the Executive branch of the territorial government.

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With 5,000 public servants (employees of the Government of the NWT (GNWT)) working on the front lines providing services and programs, as well as various levels of management, to carry out the directions and policy decisions of the legislative branch, one might ask: how many MLAs are needed in the Legislative Assembly to give direction on policy decisions? Some citizens might believe that 19 legislators are sufficient, or more than sufficient. When comparing to the rest of Canada, 19 legislators for a population of 45,000 residents is sufficient, or more than sufficient; 7 independent MLAs to represent the interests of Yellowknife's 21,000 residents in the Legislative Assembly is sufficient, or more than sufficient.

POPULATION STATISTICS

Table 1, below, shows the present population of NWT by community.

Population Estimates By Community (July 2020)

Northwest Territories	45,161	Sahtu Region	2,616
		Colville Lake	151
Beaufort Delta Region	6,931	Délıne	603
Aklavik	696	Fort Good Hope	610
Fort McPherson	741	Norman Wells	735
Inuvik	3,399	Tulita	517
Paulatuk	323		
Sachs Harbour	114	South Slave Region	7,404
Tsiigehtchic	192	Enterprise	120
Tuktoyaktuk	989	Fort Resolution	549
Ulukhaktok	477	Fort Smith	2,586
		Hay River	3,793
Dehcho Region	3,358	łutsek'e	330
Fort Liard	561		
Fort Providence	706	Tłıchǝ Region	2,956
Fort Simpson	1,258	Behchokǝ	1,983
Hay River Dene Reserve	325	Gamèti	291
Jean Marie River	87	Wekweèti	150
Kakisa	36	Whaàti	532
Nahanni Butte	95		
Sambaa K'e	99	Yellowknife Region	21,896
Wrigley	132	Dettah	228
		Yellowknife	21,372

*Please note that the population estimates for unorganized areas are suppressed but included in territorial and regional totals.

Table 2, below, shows the present population of NWT by current electoral district (which also shows each district's percentage variation, plus or minus, from the average electoral district population of 2377).

Population Estimates as at July 1, 2020 by Electoral District

	2020 Population Estimates	"Variance (% from 2,377)"
NORTHWEST TERRITORIES	45,161	
Deh Cho	1,187	-50.1
HAY RIVER		
Hay River North	1,874	-21.2
Hay River South	1,919	-19.3
INUVIK		
Inuvik Boot Lake	1,781	-25.1
Inuvik Twin Lakes	1,618	-31.9
Mackenzie Delta	1,634	-31.3
Monfwi	2,988	25.7
Nahendeh	2,286	-3.8
Nunakput	1,903	-19.9
Tu Nedhé-Wiilideh	1,458	-38.7
Sahtu	2,616	10.1
Thebacha	2,612	9.9
YELLOWKNIFE		
Frame Lake	2,684	12.9
Great Slave	2,998	26.1
Kam Lake	3,169	33.3
Range Lake	2,965	24.7
Yellowknife Centre	3,012	26.7
Yellowknife North	3,650	53.6
Yellowknife South	2,807	18.1

Readers may note minor differences between Tables 1 and 2 for certain electoral districts/communities. An explanation: a small number of persons may reside in unorganized areas which are outside a municipality's boundaries – these numbers are included in Table 2 but not in Table 1.

Table 1 indicates that 70% of NWT's population is concentrated in four centres, i.e., the capital city of Yellowknife and the towns of Hay River, Inuvik, and Fort Smith. Although the NWT population has not increased significantly in the past 20 years, there has been a noticeable migration into the larger centres. Interestingly, the residents of these four communities currently have 12 representatives, or MLAs, in the Legislative Assembly, almost 70% of the 19 members.

The other 30% of the NWT population lives in 27 small communities scattered across this vast territory. The population of those communities ranges from lows of 36 in Kakisa and 95 in Nahanni Butte to highs of 989 in Tuktoyaktuk and 1983 in Behchokò. The challenge: how do we distribute the remaining 6 or 7 seats among the 27 remote, non-urban communities, or groups of those communities, in order to provide fair and effective representation in the Legislative Assembly?



RELATIVE PARITY OF VOTING POWER

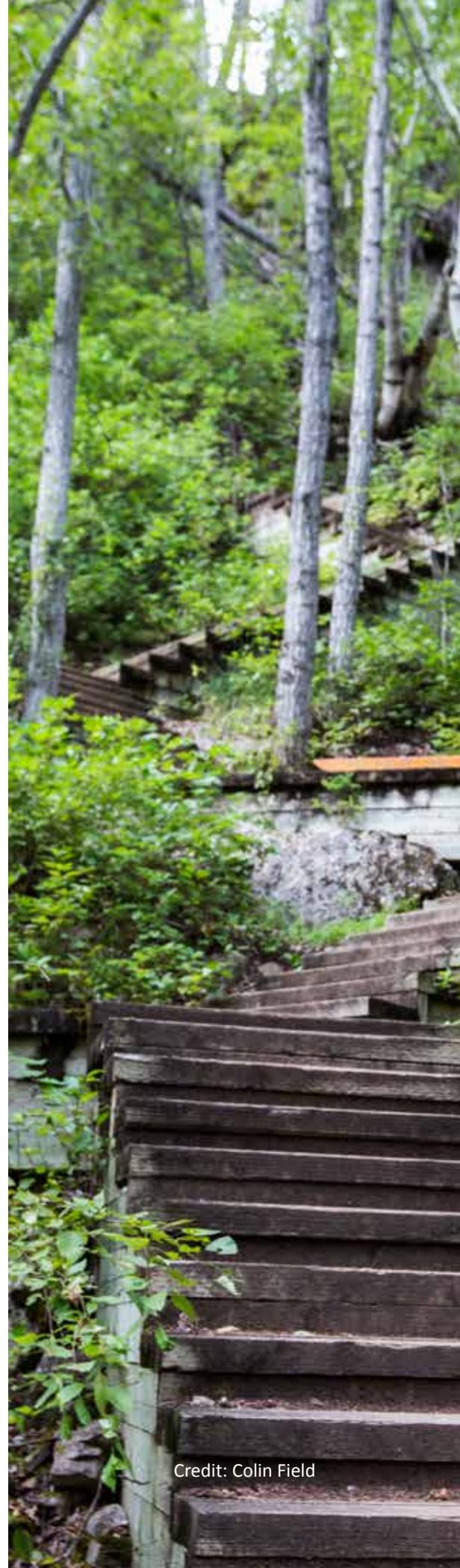
The right to vote is a constitutional right in Canada. Section 3 of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms states that every citizen has the right to vote in an election of members of a legislative assembly. The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that this right to vote is not absolute equality of voting power per se, but rather the right to effective representation in the legislature. One of the prime conditions of effective representation is indeed relative parity of voting power. "A system which dilutes one citizen's vote unduly as compared to another citizen's vote runs the risk of providing inadequate representation to the citizen whose vote is diluted ... The result will be uneven and unfair representation¹." Though relative parity of voting power is a prime consideration, deviations from absolute voting parity may be justified not only because of practical impossibility but also because of factors such as geography, community of interests, community history, culture, language, minority representation, etc., in order to ensure that "our legislative assemblies effectively represent the diversity of our social mosaic". The Courts have stated that there are constitutional limits on the unequal distribution of population among electoral districts. Deviations of plus or minus 25% from the average electoral district population is an accepted variance across electoral districts, in part to ensure that smaller populations in remote regions are effectively represented in the legislature.

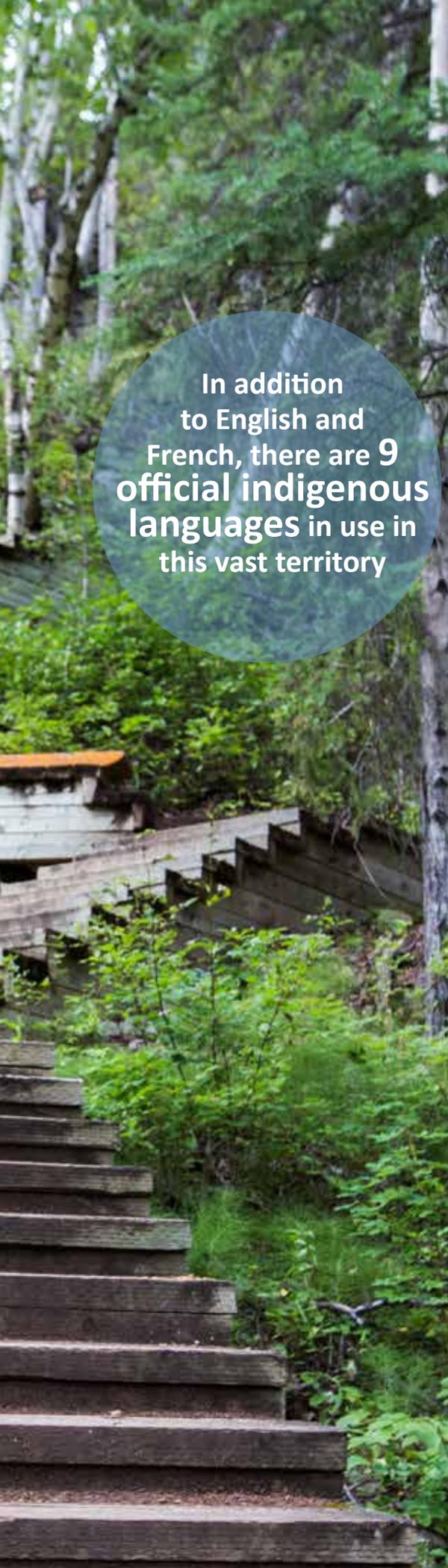
It will be seen from Table 2 that there are presently variances that exceed the +/- 25% guideline in some of our 19 electoral districts (i.e., variances above or below the average district population of 2377 residents). There is under-representation in 2 or 3 of the Yellowknife ridings, and others that are close to the 25% variance limit. There is over-representation in Deh Cho, Tu Nedhé-Wiilideh, MacKenzie Delta, and Inuvik Boot Lake. The least populous riding is Deh Cho at 1187 residents, while the most populous is the riding of Yellowknife North at 3650 residents.

While relative parity is a prime consideration, there are other factors or considerations. The Commission's mandate is not merely a mathematical exercise. In our view, there are indeed several other factors to take into consideration in the Northwest Territories.



1. Supreme Court of Canada decision in Saskatchewan Reference case in 1991





In addition to English and French, there are 9 official indigenous languages in use in this vast territory

OTHER FACTORS

An obvious factor in this jurisdiction is its geography, with dominant, and majestic features such as the Mackenzie River, Great Slave Lake, and Great Bear Lake. It encompasses an immense geographic area with a small population. Apart from the 70% of the population which resides in the four large centres, the other residents reside in small communities which are mostly remote from the capital city and the towns, and can be quite distant from each other. Some are not connected by road or highway to other communities. If community X has a population of 1200 residents, or two proximate communities have a combined population of 1200 residents, and there is no other community or residents within hundreds of kilometres, that is a factor which must be taken into consideration when determining the establishment of, or the boundaries of, an electoral district, even though the population is well below the average riding population. (In other words, this is unlike large metropolitan centres like Toronto or Vancouver where one can readily move the boundary line a distance of 20 or 30 city blocks to achieve relative parity between adjacent electoral districts.) In electoral districts that are geographically large and sparsely populated, a greater variance from the average can be justified to provide its citizens with effective representation in the legislature.

Another factor in this jurisdiction is “community of interests”, where residents in several small communities in a region belong to a common language group, or a common land claim group, or have a history of working together on regional, social, or cultural issues. A further consideration is one citizen’s relative accessibility to his/her representative in the legislature, compared to other citizens.

Languages

In addition to English and French, there are 9 official indigenous languages in use in this vast territory – Chipewyan (Dëne Sų́łné Yatıé), Cree (Nēhiyawēwin), Gwich’in (Dinjii Zhu’ Ginjik), Inuinnaqtun, Inuktitut , Inuvialuktun, North Slavey (Sahtúot’ıne Yatıı), South Slavey (Dene Zhatıé), and Tłıchq (Tłıchq Yatıı). Preservation of indigenous languages is an important issue in the NWT.

The Commission is required by the statute (see Appendix 1) to take these and other factors into consideration, together with the Guidelines passed by resolution of the Legislative Assembly in June 2021. These Guidelines state that “relative parity between electoral districts shall be sought, to the extent possible, except where special circumstances warrant exceptional deviation “. During our initial review, we are satisfied that special circumstances exist with respect to some of the current and proposed electoral districts. These must be considered individually.



The notion of “exceptional circumstances” or “special case”, that would allow a legislature to deviate from the 25% variance guideline is not an unknown in other Canadian jurisdictions. Some examples:

In Yukon, the remote electoral district of Vuntut Gwich'in has always been considered by boundary commissions and the legislature as a “special case”. It is the most remote and least accessible electoral district in Yukon. The sole community, Old Crow (population 220), is almost exclusively Vuntut Gwich'in, a language not spoken elsewhere in Yukon. For purposes of calculating the average electoral district population, the population of this riding is excluded, to avoid skewing the average.

In Nunavut, the electoral district of Hudson Bay is considered an exception, a “special case”. It is the most geographically remote electoral district in Nunavut, the most southerly of all electoral districts, situated in the middle of the vast Hudson Bay. This electoral district is inhabited by the sole community of Sanikiluaq and is more proximate to communities in Quebec than to other Nunavut communities. Its population of 812 residents is excluded when calculating the average electoral district population, to avoid skewing the average.

In British Columbia, the *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act* establishes 3 “defined regions” within which there are 17 electoral districts (of a total of 87 electoral districts in the province). These electoral districts are described as ‘vast in size but are sparsely populated’. The *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act* specifically exempts these 17 ridings from the 25% deviation standard, on account of “special circumstances”.

In Saskatchewan, the governing statute *Constituency Boundaries Act* divides the province into a northern area and a southern area (the northern area being large but sparsely populated). The statute states there shall be 61 electoral districts, 2 in the northern area, 59 in the southern area. The Commission is tasked with recommending the boundaries of the 59 electoral districts in the southern area, while adhering to a 5% variance limit from the average population of the 59 electoral districts in the southern area. There are 2 electoral districts in the northern area, and the Commission is tasked with recommending the boundary between the two, without regard to the average population of southern electoral districts. Thus, the northern area of the province is provided 2 seats in the Legislative Assembly without reference to the provincial or southern average.

In Nova Scotia, the governing statute *House of Assembly Act* acknowledges the existence of “exceptional electoral districts”, and that in those electoral districts there can be justification for deviation more than 25% above or below the average population of electoral districts, in order to provide for effective representation in the Legislative Assembly for the citizens of those electoral districts. In a 2019 report, the Nova Scotia Electoral Boundaries Commission recommended the establishment of 7 “exceptional electoral districts” (out of a total of 51 electoral districts in the province). These recommendations were to provide fair representation in the Assembly for pockets of minority groups throughout the province, in particular African-Canadians, Mi'kmaq indigenous people, and Acadians. These recommendations of the 2019 Nova Scotia Commission were accepted by the Legislative Assembly and were in place for the recent general election in that province.

OBSERVATIONS OF THE CURRENT ELECTORAL DISTRICTS

Larger Communities:

We commence this part of our review with the four urban centres of Yellowknife, Hay River, Inuvik and Fort Smith, where there are a total of 12 electoral districts. As stated earlier, 70% of the NWT population resides in these 12 electoral districts. Table 2 shows the percentage variance of the population of each of these districts from the territorial average of 2377 persons. All of the Yellowknife ridings, and the Fort Smith riding (Thebacha) are above the territorial average and, to varying degrees, are under-represented in the legislature. The 4 ridings in Hay River and Inuvik, as presently configured, are below the territorial average, and hence over-represented.

In any of the larger communities where there are more than one electoral district – currently Yellowknife, Hay River and Inuvik – government officials (NWT Bureau of Statistics and the Geometrics Division) have the capability to establish a new boundary line between adjacent electoral districts within the community, so as to re-distribute the community’s population into (roughly) equal districts. This is often required when there have been different rates of growth within certain areas or neighbourhoods within the community since the previous setting of boundary lines. See, for example, at Table 2, the Yellowknife North riding compared to the other Yellowknife ridings.

It occurs to the Commission that, when considering an average population of electoral districts, and variations from that average, the urban electoral districts ought to be considered as one group, and then strive to establish electoral districts that are close to the average of that group.

Using current population figures, and assuming that the populations of electoral districts within each of Yellowknife, Hay River and Inuvik could be re-distributed to achieve equal electoral districts within that community, the variances from the “urban group” average present a more equitable picture, as indicated below.

Total population of these 12 electoral districts = 30,799
Average population of each electoral district within those 12 = 2567
Thebacha riding, population 2612: 2% above the average
Hay River, two ridings of 1896 each: 26% below the average
Inuvik, two ridings of 1700 each: 34% below the average
Yellowknife, seven ridings of 3003 each: 17% above the average

Presented in this manner, there is, for the most part, relative parity between the 12 urban ridings.



Nunakput

This electoral district encompasses the four Inuvialuit communities of Paulatuk (population 323), Sachs Harbour (population 114), Tuktoyaktuk (population 989), and Ulukhaktok (population 477). All four communities are north of the 69th parallel. All are in the Inuvialuit Settlement Region, the homeland of the Inuvialuit, designated as such in 1984 in the Inuvialuit Settlement Agreement with the Government of Canada. Languages spoken in these communities are Inuinnaqtun and English. Major economic activities are hunting, trapping, fishing, print making, and tourism. In our view, this grouping of communities in the western Arctic region within one electoral district makes sense, and ought to continue. The Commission is satisfied that these are “special circumstances” that justify a stand-alone electoral district, notwithstanding any deviation from the average population of electoral districts.

Mackenzie Delta

This electoral district encompasses the three communities of Aklavik (population 696), Fort McPherson (population 741), and Tsiigehtchic (population 192). The majority of the population in all three communities is Indigenous. Aklavik is included in two land claim areas – Inuvialuit and Gwich’in. Languages spoken in Aklavik are Inuinnaqtun, Gwich’in and English. The communities of Fort McPherson and Tsiigehtchic are majority Gwich’in. The Commission is satisfied that this is a logical grouping of communities

in the Mackenzie Delta region to constitute a stand alone electoral district, notwithstanding any deviation from the average population of electoral districts.

Sahtu

This electoral district is comprised of 5 communities within the Sahtu administrative region of GNWT. Its vast area west of Great Bear Lake is the subject of the 1993 Sahtu Dene and Métis Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement between the Sahtu Dene and Métis and the Government of Canada. The 5 communities are Norman Wells (population 735), Fort Good Hope (population 610), Délı̨nę (the birthplace of the game of ice hockey, population 603), Tulita (population 517), and Colville Lake (population 151). Although this electoral district’s population is predominantly Dene, a significant non-Indigenous presence exists in Norman Wells, the regional centre. Languages spoken are North Slavey and English. Again, this is a logical grouping of communities in the region to constitute one electoral district.

Nahendeh

This electoral district includes 6 communities; the majority of the residents are Dehcho First Nations and Métis. These communities are Fort Simpson (population 1258), Fort Liard (561), Jean Marie River (87), Nahanni Butte (95), Sambaa K’e (99), and Wrigley (132). Fort Liard is close to the British Columbia border. All of these communities are within the Dehcho Region, an administrative region of the GNWT, together with the

We now turn to the remaining 7 electoral districts, which will be discussed individually.

Nunakput

Mackenzie Delta

Sahtu

Nahendeh

Deh Cho

Monfwi

Tu Nedhé-Wı̨łı̨deh



communities of Fort Providence, Kakisa, and K'atłodeeche First Nation (Hay River Reserve) (which are in a different electoral district, the Deh Cho electoral district). Each of these communities has its own First Nation organization, which belongs to the Dehcho First Nations group (DFN), and which has been in negotiations with the Government of Canada since the 1990s. Main languages are South Slavey and English. The total population of this electoral district is 2286, very close to the average of 2377 for current territorial electoral districts.

Deh Cho

This electoral district is comprised of the 3 Dene communities of Fort Providence (population 706), K'atłodeeche First Nation (325), and Kakisa (36), together with the small hamlet of Enterprise (120). Enterprise is at an important junction of the NWT highway system, mid-way between the Alberta border and Great Slave Lake. The majority of the population in this small hamlet is non-Indigenous. Each of Fort Providence, Kakisa and K'atłodeeche First Nation has their own First Nation organization, which belong to the Dehcho First Nations group. The main languages spoken in this electoral district are South Slavey and English.

The Deh Cho riding has the smallest population (1187) of the current electoral districts.

Monfwi

This electoral district encompasses the traditional territory of the Tłı̄chǫ people, which was the subject of the historic land claim and self-government agreement with the Government of Canada in 2005. There are 4 Tłı̄chǫ communities in this large electoral district: Behchokò (population 1983), Whatì (532), Gamè̀tì (291) and Wekweè̀tì (150). The main language spoken is Tłı̄chǫ and also English.

This is clearly a logical grouping of Tłı̄chǫ communities, and ought to be continued.

Tu Nedhé-Wiilideh

Prior to 2014, the (then) electoral district of Tu Nedhé was comprised of 2 Dene communities: Fort Resolution (population today 549), and Łutsel K'e (330). Prior to 2014, the (then) Wiilideh electoral district in the northernmost area of Yellowknife included the 2 Dene neighbourhoods/communities of Dettah (population today 228) and Ndilò (351). In 2014, the 17th Legislative Assembly passed Bill 18 which made some changes to the electoral districts described in the *Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act*. One of those changes was to remove the populations of Dettah and Ndilò from the Wiilideh riding and to redistribute those populations into the Tu Nedhé riding. At the same time, this new, combined electoral district was renamed Tu Nedhé- Wiilideh. This change was recommended by the previous Boundaries Commission, presumably, in part, to address population variances. Thus, today this electoral district is comprised of these 4 Dene communities.



The Akaitcho Dene First Nations (ADFN) is the representative body of the Dene who are Indigenous to Fort Resolution, Łutsel K'e, Dettah and Ndilq, and is in negotiations with the Government of Canada on land claims and self government issues (the Akaitcho Land Claims Process).

Fort Resolution and Łutsel K'e were traditionally occupied by the Chipewyan Dene. Predominant languages are English and Chipewyan.

The Dene residing in Dettah and Ndilq are descendants of the Tłı̄chq̄, the Yellowknives Dene and Tetsot'ine, the Indigenous Chipewyan related people living around the Great Slave Lake. Languages spoken are English and Yellowknives Dene First Nation has two traditional languages, Willihdeh Yatì, which is a dialect of the Tłı̄chq̄ (Dogrib) language, and Tetsot'ine Yatìé, which is a dialect of the Dëne Sų́łné (Chipewyan) language.

Apart from the homogeneous Dene neighbourhoods of Ndilq and Dettah, the remaining population of the capital city of Yellowknife is quite diverse, including citizens from other Dene and Inuit communities, from elsewhere in Canada, and many first generation and second generation new Canadians.

With this initial review of the current electoral districts, and the foregoing observations, we are of the view that the current distribution of 19 electoral districts is fair and reasonable, generally speaking. It addresses, for the most part, the "relative parity of voting power" principle, the 25% variance guideline (with exceptions), and additional factors of geography, accessibility, language groups, land claim groups, community of interests, historical connections, existing special circumstances, etc. One can understand the present justification for the various aspects of this current distribution of 19 seats, to provide fair and effective representation for all citizens in our legislature. There are no glaring anomalies. In Options A and B presented on the following pages, we offer for consideration some minor changes in the allocation of three small communities – Samba K'e, Jean Marie River, and Enterprise.

An issue which must be considered is the size of the Legislative Assembly, how many seats are necessary for effective representation for all. Is the status quo of 19 seats sufficient, should there be fewer seats, should there be more seats? The Commission would welcome input from the public on this issue.

The Commission's initial thought is that there does not exist justification to increase the number of electoral districts in the NWT, nor to increase the number of MLAs in the Legislative Assembly. There has not been any significant growth in population. As we noted earlier in this discussion paper, the NWT already has a considerably higher ratio of MLAs to citizens than in most Canadian jurisdictions.

Another consideration is cost: information we have received from the Speaker's office and the Department of Finance indicates that for each additional MLA it is estimated that there would be annual expenses of \$325,000. - \$435,000., and one-time expenses of approximately \$110,000. Some citizens believe such financial resources are better spent on additional health care workers, education resources, community social workers, etc. Another consideration is what we could describe as the "snowball effect". That is, if a current Legislative Assembly determines that there is a special or urgent need for an additional seat in region x, and grants the request, does it not lead to subsequent requests from region y, region z, etc.?

OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

At this stage of our mandate, we put forward two specific options for consideration by the general public, and seek input via written submissions and/or public hearings. Under option A, there would continue to be 19 MLAs in the territorial legislature, as described below and at Table 3. Under Option B, there would be 16 MLAs in the legislature, as described below and at Table 4.

These are not recommendations, but rather options to promote discussion and feedback.

Option A

This option is similar to the status quo, with some minor changes. There would continue to be 19 electoral districts, 19 MLAs.

Firstly, we refer to the 12 electoral districts within the 4 most populous communities – Yellowknife, Hay River, Inuvik, and Fort Smith.

In this option, the Thebacha electoral district would remain unchanged.

Each of the 7 ridings in Yellowknife (total population is 21,021, which for these purposes excludes the population of Ndilo) would be reconfigured by moving the boundary lines, as necessary, to provide for an approximate population in each electoral district of 3003 (1/7 of 21,021).

The two ridings in Inuvik (total population 3399) would be reconfigured by moving the boundary line between the two, to provide for an approximate population in each riding of 1700 (1/2 of 3399).

Under this option, the population (120) of the hamlet of Enterprise would be re-distributed to the electoral district of Hay River South. Then, the two ridings in Hay River would be re-configured by moving the boundary line between the two, to provide for a more equal population in each riding, giving each an approximate population of 1956 (1/2 of 3913).

As shown in Table 3, the majority of the 12 urban ridings would meet the requirement for relative parity, with only the Inuvik ridings being over-represented by 34%, as at the present time.

Nahendeh and Deh Cho ridings: Under Option A, the tiny Dene communities of Sambaa K'e and Jean Marie River would be re-distributed from the Nahendeh electoral district (currently 6 Dene communities) to the Deh Cho electoral district (currently 3 Dene communities). This re-distribution would leave the Nahendeh MLA representing 4 Dene communities; the Deh Cho MLA representing 5 Dene communities. This would provide more balance in the Dehcho Region and reduce the travel burden on the Nahendeh MLA.

Each of the other 5 non-urban ridings – Nunakput, Mackenzie Delta, Sahtu, Monfwi and Tu Nedhé-Wiilideh – would remain unchanged.

For reasons detailed earlier in this paper, each of the 7 non-urban ridings would be considered a “special case”, and would not have its riding population compared to any territorial average, regional average, or urban average. The exceptional circumstances detailed for these ridings would serve to override any need to achieve absolute or relative parity in population statistics.

**Option A
is presented at
Table 3 on Page 16.**



OPTION A

TABLE 3 (19 electoral districts)

Territorial population = 45,161		
Population of 4 urban centres (12 electoral districts) = 30,919		
Average of 12 urban districts = 2577		
ELECTORAL DISTRICT	POPULATION	VARIANCE FROM URBAN AVERAGE
Yellowknife Frame Lake	3003	+ 17 %
Yellowknife Great Slave	3003	+ 17 %
Yellowknife Kam Lake	3003	+ 17 %
Yellowknife Range Lake	3003	+ 17 %
Yellowknife Centre	3003	+ 17 %
Yellowknife North	3003	+ 17 %
Yellowknife South	3003	+ 17 %
Hay River North	1956	-24 %
Hay River South	1956	-24 %
Inuvik Boot Lake	1700	-34 %
Inuvik Twin Lakes	1700	-34 %
Thebacha	2612	+ 1 %
Nunakput	1903	n/a
MacKenzie Delta	1634	n/a
Sahtu	2616	n/a
Deh Cho	1253	n/a
Nahendeh	2100	n/a
Monfwi	2988	n/a
Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh	1458	n/a

OPTION B

TABLE 4 (16 electoral districts)

Territorial population = 45,161		
Population of 4 urban centres (9 electoral districts) = 30,919		
Average of 9 urban districts = 3435		
ELECTORAL DISTRICT	POPULATION	VARIANCE FROM URBAN AVERAGE
Yellowknife 1	3503	+ 2 %
Yellowknife 2	3503	+ 2 %
Yellowknife 3	3503	+ 2 %
Yellowknife 4	3503	+ 2 %
Yellowknife 5	3503	+ 2 %
Yellowknife 6	3503	+ 2 %
Hay River	3913	+ 11 %
Inuvik	3399	-1 %
Thebacha	2612	-24 %
Nunakput	1903	n/a
MacKenzie Delta	1634	n/a
Sahtu	2616	n/a
Deh Cho	1253	n/a
Nahendeh	2100	n/a
Monfwi	2988	n/a
Tu Nedhe-Wiilideh	1458	n/a



Option B

This option would see a reduction in the number of MLAs from 19 to 16. In particular, there would be a decrease of one electoral district in each of the urban centres of Hay River, Inuvik and Yellowknife.

It can reasonably be argued that one MLA is sufficient to represent the 3793 residents of the community of Hay River, and that one MLA is sufficient to represent the 3399 residents of Inuvik. In the same vein, a group of 6 independent elected MLAs ought to be sufficient to effectively represent the interests of the 21,021 residents of the capital city of Yellowknife.

In this option, as in Option A, the population (120) of the hamlet of Enterprise would be re-distributed to the Hay River electoral district.

In this option, as in Option A, the tiny Dene communities of Sambaa K'e and Jean Marie River would be re-distributed from the Nahendeh riding to the Deh Cho riding, for reasons stated under Option A.

In Option B, there would be 9 electoral districts in the 4 most populous communities of Yellowknife, Hay River, Inuvik, and Fort Smith. The total population in these 9 ridings (including Enterprise as part of Hay River riding) is 30,919; the urban average is 3435 residents (1/9 of 30,919).

The total population of Yellowknife is 21,021, which, for these purposes, excludes the population of Ndiq. In this option the current 7 ridings in Yellowknife would be reconfigured into 6 ridings. New boundary lines would be established such that the approximate population of each electoral district would be 3503 (1/6 of 21021).

In this option there would be only one electoral district in each of Hay River and Inuvik.

There would be no changes with respect to the electoral districts of Thebacha, Nunakput, Mackenzie Delta, Sahtu, Monfwi and Tu Nedhé-Wiilideh.

It can be seen that, in this option, there is a more equitable picture among the urban ridings, i.e., all but one (Thebacha) are within 11% variance of the urban average, and all are within the 25% variance guideline.

**Option B
is presented at
Table 4 on Page 17.**



Credit: Angela Gzowski

NAMES

Part of the Commission's mandate is to make recommendations, if any, on any changes that ought to be made in the names of electoral districts. We invite the public to put forward any suggestions they have on this topic as well.

SUMMATION

The foregoing two options are respectfully submitted for the public's consideration and discussion.

It is the Commission's view that the issue of a possible re-distribution or reconfiguration of electoral districts in the Northwest Territories is an important one, requiring public consultation and input. We are also of the view that there is not necessarily one correct resolution of this issue, that reasonable people can have different, valid views. There can, however, be an incorrect resolution, as evidenced by the Friends of Democracy case in 1999.

We are satisfied that both options presented herein are fair and reasonable. There may be others.

Respectfully submitted,

2021 NWT ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

Ted Richard, Chair

Jack Rowe, Member

Glen Abernethy, Member

Contact information for the Commission:

Phone: **(867) 445-6005**

Website: **www.nwtelectoralboundaries.ca**

E-mail: **info@nwtelectoralboundaries.ca**

Submit Written Submissions to:

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES COMMISSION

ATTN: Danielle Mager

Box 1320

Yellowknife, NT

X1A 2L9

or emailed to **info@nwtelectoralboundaries.ca**

Submissions will be received until January 31, 2022.



APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX A – Electoral Boundaries Commission Act (s.2, s.7, s.8, s.9) and Terms of Reference

Section 2

Commission established	<p>2. (1) An Electoral Boundaries Commission must be established, by resolution of the Legislative Assembly,</p> <p>(a) within two years after the day fixed for the return of the writs for the 2003 general election; and</p> <p>(b) within two years after the day fixed for the return of the writs for each second succeeding general election.</p>	<p>2. (1) Par résolution de l'Assemblée législative, une Commission de délimitation des circonscriptions électorales doit être constituée :</p> <p>a) dans un délai de deux ans à compter de la date fixée pour le rapport du bref de l'élection générale de 2003;</p> <p>b) dans un délai de deux ans à compter de la date fixée pour le rapport du bref de chaque élection successive.</p>	Constitution de la Commission
Composition	<p>(2) The Commission shall be composed of a chairperson and two other members appointed by the Commissioner on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly.</p>	<p>(2) La Commission est composée de trois membres, dont le président, nommés par le commissaire, sur la recommandation de l'Assemblée législative.</p>	Composition
Chairperson	<p>(3) The chairperson must be a judge or retired judge of the Supreme Court or the Court of Appeal.</p>	<p>(3) Le président doit être un juge, ou un juge à la retraite, de la Cour suprême ou de la Cour d'appel.</p>	Président

Section 7

Powers of Commission	<p>7. In performing its duties, the Commission</p> <p>(a) has all the powers of a Board established under the <i>Public Inquiries Act</i>; and</p> <p>(b) may regulate its proceedings and the conduct of its business.</p>	<p>7. Dans l'accomplissement de ses fonctions, la Commission :</p> <p>a) a les attributions d'une commission constituée en vertu de la <i>Loi sur les enquêtes publiques</i>;</p> <p>b) peut adopter des règles visant à régir ses délibérations et la conduite de ses affaires.</p>	Pouvoir de la Commission
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Section 8

Duties of Commission	<p>8. (1) The Commission shall review the area, boundaries, name and representation of the existing electoral districts and shall, on completion of that review, prepare a report containing recommendations respecting the area, boundaries, name and representation of the electoral districts proposed by the Commission.</p>	<p>8. (1) La Commission, après avoir procédé à l'examen du territoire, des limites, du nom et de la représentation des circonscriptions électorales existantes, prépare un rapport contenant ses recommandations concernant le territoire, les limites, le nom et la représentation des circonscriptions électorales qu'elle a proposées.</p>	Fonctions de la Commission
Public hearings	<p>(2) The Commission shall, before completing its report, hold public hearings at the times and places in</p> <p>the Northwest Territories that it considers appropriate to hear representations respecting existing or proposed electoral districts.</p>	<p>(2) Avant de rédiger son rapport, la Commission tient des audiences publiques aux Territoires du</p> <p>Nord-Ouest aux heures, dates et lieux qu'elle estime indiqués pour entendre les observations concernant les circonscriptions électorales existantes ou les circonscriptions électorales proposées.</p>	Audiences publiques
Public information	<p>(3) The Commission may undertake such programs and measures as it considers appropriate to inform the public about the values and principles that underlie the determination of electoral boundaries and about the process that leads to that determination.</p>	<p>(3) La Commission peut, selon ce qu'elle estime indiqué, mettre des programmes sur pied et prendre des mesures pour informer le public en ce qui a trait aux valeurs et aux principes qui guident la détermination des limites électorales et au processus qui mène à leur détermination.</p>	Information du public

Section 9

Relevant considerations

9. The Commission, in preparing its report, shall take into consideration

- (a) demographic factors, including the sparsity, density or rate of growth of the population of any area;
- (b) census data and other information pertaining to population;
- (c) information in the register of electors maintained under the *Elections and Plebiscites Act*;
- (d) geographic factors, including the accessibility, size or shape of any area;
- (e) community boundaries and boundaries established under lands, resources and self-government agreements, including land claim and treaty land entitlement agreements;
- (f) facilities for and patterns of transportation and communication within and between different areas;
- (g) language, culture and any other special community or diversity of interests of the residents of any part of the Northwest Territories;
- (h) special circumstances relating to any existing electoral districts;
- (i) public input obtained under subsection 8(2);
- (j) the minimum and maximum number of members of the Legislative Assembly authorized by the *Northwest Territories Act*;
- (k) any guidelines or criteria proposed for the consideration of the Commission by resolution of the Legislative Assembly; and
- (l) any other similar and relevant factors that the Commission considers appropriate.

S.N.W.T. 2006,c.15,s.355.

9. Lors de la préparation de son rapport, la Commission tient compte de ce qui suit :

- a) les considérations d'ordre démographique, notamment en ce qui touche la densité de population ou le taux de croissance de la population d'une région;
- b) les données de recensement et les autres renseignements relatifs à la population;
- c) les renseignements contenus dans la liste électorale tenue en vertu de la *Loi sur les élections et les référendums*;
- d) les considérations d'ordre géographique, notamment en ce qui touche l'accessibilité, la superficie ou la configuration d'une région;
- e) les limites de la collectivité et les limites établies en vertu d'accords relatifs aux terres, aux ressources ou à l'autonomie gouvernementale, notamment les accords portant sur les revendications territoriales et sur les droits fonciers issus de traités;
- f) les infrastructures et les moyens de transport et de communication à l'intérieur des différentes régions et entre elles;
- g) la langue, la culture et les autres similitudes ou la diversité des intérêts des résidents d'une région des Territoires du Nord-Ouest;
- h) les circonstances particulières relatives à une circonscription électorale existante:
- i) l'avis du public obtenu en application du paragraphe 8(2);
- j) les nombres minimal et maximal de députés à l'Assemblée législative autorisés par la *Loi sur les Territoires du Nord-Ouest*;
- k) les directives ou critères qui lui sont soumis par résolution de l'Assemblée législative;
- l) toute autre considération semblable et

Principes de mise en oeuvre

pertinente qu'elle estime indiquée.
L.T.N.-O. 2006, ch. 15, art. 355.



TERMS OF REFERENCE

Pursuant to Section 2.1 of the *Electoral Boundaries Commission Act* (the Act), an Electoral Boundaries Commission must be established, by resolution of the Legislative Assembly, within two years after the day fixed for the return of the writs following a general election.

The previous Electoral Boundaries Commission was struck in 2013 and was tasked with providing three options for the consideration of the Legislative Assembly: 18, 19, and 21 electoral districts. The Assembly chose the 19-seat model.

1. PURPOSE

The Commission shall:

- 1) Review the area, boundaries, name and representation of the existing electoral districts and shall, on completion of that review, prepare a report containing recommendations respecting the area, boundaries, name and representation of the electoral districts proposed by the Commission.

2. GUIDELINES

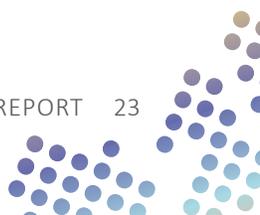
Pursuant to section 9(k) of the *Act*, which enables the Legislative Assembly to establish guidelines or criteria that shall be taken into consideration by the Commission, the following guidelines are set down for the Commission:

- 1) The Commission shall review the existing electoral districts using the most recent and accurate census and other population data available.
- 2) In keeping with Canadian constitutional conventions, relative parity between electoral districts shall be sought, to the extent possible, except where special circumstances warrant exceptional deviation.

- 3) For greater certainty, relative parity means that the percentage variation between the number of persons in a riding and the average mean should be within plus or minus 25 per cent.
- 4) In addition to whatever recommendations the Commission may propose, the Commission shall recommend how the electoral boundaries should be drawn if the Legislative Assembly were to be comprised of a minimum of 19 members.
- 5) The Commission shall prepare an interim report with proposed electoral district boundaries for review by the public and discussion at public hearings.
- 6) The Commission shall establish a website or other publically accessible mechanism(s), in addition to public hearings, to receive submissions on the existing and/or proposed boundaries.
- 7) All submissions to the Commission shall be considered public documents.
- 8) Simultaneous translation of official languages shall be available at public hearings where the use of an official language in a particular community or region is sizable enough to warrant the employ of translation services.
- 9) If the Commission is not in a position to accomplish its mandate within the existing budget allocated, it may return to the Legislative Assembly for additional funds.
- 10) The final report of the Commission, complete with recommendations, shall be submitted in English and French to the Speaker and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly no later than twelve months after the Commission is struck.

3. COMPOSITION

The Commission shall be composed of a chairperson and two other members appointed by the Commissioner on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly. The Chairperson must be a judge or retired judge of the Supreme Court or the Court of Appeal.



4. CONSIDERATIONS

Pursuant to the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act, in preparing its report, the Commission shall take into consideration

- a) demographic factors, including the sparsity, density or rate of growth of the population of any area;
- b) census data and other information pertaining to population;
- c) information in the register of electors maintained under the *Elections and Plebiscites Act*;
- d) geographic factors, including the accessibility, size of shape of any area;
- e) community boundaries and boundaries established under lands, resources and self-government agreements, including land claim and treaty land entitlement agreements;
- f) facilities for and patterns of transportation and communication within and between different areas;
- g) language, culture and any other special community or diversity of interests of the residents of any part of the Northwest Territories;
- h) special circumstances relating to any existing electoral districts;
- i) public input obtained under subsection 8(2);
- j) the minimum and maximum number of members of the Legislative Assembly authorized by the *Northwest Territories Act*;
- k) any guidelines or criteria proposed for the consideration of the Commission by resolution of the Legislative Assembly;
- l) any other similar and relevant factors that the Commission considers appropriate.

5. REPORT

The final report of the Commission, complete with recommendations, shall be submitted in English and French to the Speaker and the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly no later than twelve months after the Commission is struck.

6. FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The Clerk of the Legislative Assembly in consultation with the Commission, shall identify a Secretary to the Commission. Pursuant to section 6 of the *Act*, the Commission may engage the services of any persons necessary to assist in the exercise of its powers and the performance of its duties under the *Act*.

The Speaker, on the recommendations of the Board of Management, will approve funding for the Commission. The Commission will ensure expenditures do not exceed the allotted funds.

Budget and Expenditures: \$150,000

7. REMUNERATION

A member of the Commission, including the chairperson if he or she is a retired judge, is entitled to remuneration for his or her services at the rates determined by the Board of Management.

8. TERMINATION

A Commission dissolves 60 days after its report is laid before the Legislative Assembly.



APPENDIX 2

Brief Biographies



Ted Richard is a retired judge, having served on the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories from 1988 to 2012. Previously, Mr. Richard was a Member of the Legislative Assembly of the NWT from 1984 to 1988. Mr. Richard chaired the Nunavut Electoral Boundaries Commission in 1998 and again in 2011.



Jack Rowe is a lifetime northerner, living in Hay River. Jack has been active in a family business since 1975 to date. Jack has served the Town of Hay River as a councillor from 1984- 1990, and as Mayor from 1994 to 2000. Additionally, Jack represented the NWT Association of Municipalities on the Western Coalition dealing with the division of Nunavut.



Glen Abernethy is a lifetime northerner who currently resides in Yellowknife. Glen was an MLA for 12 years (2007 – 2019) representing the Great Slave Riding of Yellowknife. In addition to representing his constituency Glen was elected as a member of the Executive Council in 2011 and again in 2015 where he was responsible for a number of portfolios including Health and Social Services from 2013 to 2019.

APPENDIX 3

Recent History:

In recent years the Legislative Assembly has struggled in its efforts to achieve a satisfactory framework or model for fair and effective representation in the legislature. There has been much debate concerning the issues of the number of seats in the legislature, how those seats should be distributed among the regions and communities of the NWT, and how to ensure that all citizens' voting rights are respected. The origins of this debate include the adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982, and the division of the Northwest Territories in 1999.

A constitutional right: Section 3 of the Charter of Rights states that every citizen has the right to vote in an election of members of a legislative assembly.

The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that this right to vote is not equality of voting power per se but rather the right to effective representation. One of the prime conditions of effective representation is indeed relative parity of voting power. "A system which dilutes one citizen's vote unduly as compared with another citizen's vote runs the risk of providing inadequate representation to the citizen whose vote is diluted The result will be uneven and unfair representation." Though relative parity of voting power is a prime consideration, deviations from absolute voting parity may

be justified not only because of practical impossibility but also because of factors such as geography, community history, culture, language, minority representation, etc., in order to ensure that "our legislative assemblies effectively represent the diversity of our social mosaic".

The Courts have stated that there are constitutional limits on the unequal distribution of population among electoral districts.

Deviations of plus or minus 25% from the average electoral district population is the accepted variance across electoral districts, in part to ensure that smaller populations in remote regions are effectively represented in the legislature.

It has been recognized that there will be electoral districts that are "over-represented" (i.e., the population is significantly lower than the average electoral district population), and other electoral districts that are "under-represented" (i.e., the population is significantly greater than the average electoral district population). Over-representation in one electoral district cannot justify under-representation in another electoral district.

Effective April 1, 1999, the Parliament of Canada divided the existing Northwest Territories into two new territories – Nunavut in the east, and the remaining NWT in the west. Prior to division, the

Legislative Assembly of NWT was comprised of 24 members. The population of the entire NWT at time of division was approximately 60,000.

Electoral boundaries commissions were established in 1998 in each new territory, to make recommendations regarding the number of electoral districts in each territory and the location and boundaries of those districts.

In the new NWT, 14 electoral districts remained following division. The 1998 NWT Electoral Boundaries Commission recommended that the new NWT legislature be comprised of 16 electoral districts, including 6 districts in the Yellowknife area. (this in effect would have added 2 additional electoral districts within the city of Yellowknife, i.e., additional to the 4 Yellowknife electoral districts existing prior to division.) The population of Yellowknife at that time was approximately 17,500. The population of the new NWT was approximately 40,000.

The NWT legislature (the 13th Assembly) considered the 1998 Commission's Report in November 1998. In the end, the members rejected the Commission's recommendation to add 2 seats in Yellowknife. The vote was 7-6, with 3 abstentions. Legislation was passed, confirming 14 electoral districts only.



Shortly thereafter, a group of Yellowknife citizens commenced a Court action, seeking a declaration that the decision of the NWT legislature rejecting the additional seats for Yellowknife was invalid as being a violation of section 3 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms of the citizens of Yellowknife. In the decision of the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories on March 5, 1999, the Court found on the evidence that there was an undue dilution of the right to vote in those under-represented electoral districts in Yellowknife and elsewhere where the percentage variation from the average electoral district population was greater than plus 25%, and that this dilution was without justification. The Court granted a suspension of its decision for a period of time to allow the Legislative Assembly to replace or amend the invalid provisions in order to comply with section 3 of the Charter.

Accordingly, the Legislative Assembly (the 13th Assembly) dealt with the matter again in July 1999. It passed legislation increasing the seats from 14 to 19, with the 5 new seats being allocated 3 to Yellowknife, 1 to Hay River and 1 to Inuvik.

Following general elections in December 1999 and November 2003, the 15th Legislative Assembly established an Electoral Boundaries Commission in 2006, to review the number of

electoral districts, the boundaries, etc. pursuant to the statutory requirement that such a review be conducted by an independent commission after every 2nd general election.

The 2006 Commission observed that among the 19 existing electoral districts, a number were over-represented, notably Tu Nedhé, and a number were under-represented, notably some of the Yellowknife districts, and the Monfwi electoral district in the Tłı̄chq̄ region. In its Final Report on March 31, 2006 the Commission recommended that 2 new electoral districts be created –an additional one for Yellowknife, and an additional one in the Tłı̄chq̄ region. This would have increased the number of electoral districts from 19 to 21.

On October 24, 2006, the 15th Assembly rejected the Commission’s recommendation for the 2 additional seats (8 members voted in favor of the Commission’s recommendation, 9 against) Those opposed to the Commission’s recommendation stated that “now is not the time to expand the size of the legislature”. A bill was passed making adjustments to the boundaries of the Yellowknife, Hay River and Inuvik electoral districts to achieve a more equal distribution of the population in those larger communities. The number of electoral districts remained at 19. At that time the population of NWT was approximately 43,000.

Next, in 2013, following general elections in 2007 and 2011, another Electoral Boundaries Commission was established. The Legislative Assembly (the 17th Assembly) directed the new Commission to hold public hearings in the communities, to seek public input and then to make recommendations regarding the location and boundaries of electoral districts in 3 different scenarios: 18 electoral districts, 19 electoral districts, and 21 electoral districts.

In May 2013, the 2013 Commission submitted its Final Report to the Legislative Assembly (17th Assembly). At that time, the population of NWT was approximately 43,000; population of Yellowknife was approximately 20,000. The Commission observed that in 5 of the electoral districts, in particular Deh Cho and Tu Nedhé, the population was much lower than the average electoral district population of 2282 (thus over-representation), and that in another 5 of the electoral districts, i.e., Monfwi electoral district and some of the Yellowknife electoral districts, the population greatly exceeded the average, by more than 25% (thus under-representation).

As directed, the Commission made recommendations for each of the 3 scenarios. These can be roughly summarized as follows:

18 electoral districts:

- in each of Inuvik, Hay River and Yellowknife, the population is re-distributed among the existing electoral districts to achieve a more equal balance among the districts
- communities within the existing electoral districts of Deh Cho and Tu Nedhé are combined into one electoral district

19 electoral districts:

- the population in the communities of Detah and Ndilo are removed from the Yellowknife area electoral district of Weledeh and re-distributed into the Tu Nedhé electoral district. The remaining population of the 7 existing electoral districts in Yellowknife is re-distributed to achieve a more equal balance among those 7 districts
- in each of the communities of Inuvik and Hay River, the population is re-distributed between the 2 existing electoral districts to achieve a more equal balance

21 electoral districts:

- there are 2 additional electoral districts created –one in Yellowknife and one in the Tłı̄chǫ region
- the population of the 8 electoral districts in Yellowknife is re-distributed to achieve a more equal balance among them

- the existing electoral district of Monfwi is divided into 2 new electoral districts – one for the community of Behchokǫ, the other for the communities of Edzo, Whatì, Gamètì and Wekweètì
- in each if the communities of Inuvik and Hay River, the population is re-distributed between the 2 existing electoral districts to achieve a more equal balance.

The Final Report of the 2013 Commission was considered by the 17th Assembly on November 5, 2013 in Committee of the Whole. There was extensive debate, different views were expressed; yet a fulsome discussion with all members being respectful of the views of others. Most members recognized that the population growth in NWT was stagnant, and also that the population was migrating to the urban centres. Many members stated that their perception was that the public was not in favor of increasing the number of seats in the legislature. Some members expressed dissatisfaction with all 3 of the Commission's proposals. Members expressed a desire to keep the issues of the number of seats, location of electoral districts, etc., out of the Courts.

In the end, the MLAs voted to accept the proposal for 19 electoral districts. The vote in Committee of the Whole was 10 in favor, 7 opposed, no abstentions. A bill, Bill 18, was subsequently drafted to implement this decision. When Bill 18 came before the Assembly's Committee of the Whole for consideration on March 12, 2014, there was further debate. A motion was made to amend Bill 18 to add an additional electoral district in Yellowknife, to add an additional electoral district in the Tłı̄chǫ region, and to leave the Tu Nedhé district as is (i.e., only the communities of Ft. Resolution and Łutsel K'e). That motion in Committee of the Whole was defeated by a vote of 11-6. Bill 18, which set the present boundaries of the current 19 electoral districts was passed on Third Reading in the 17th Assembly, following yet another debate on May 28, 2014. The vote on Third Reading was 11 in favor, 7 opposed, no abstentions.

In June 2021, following general elections in 2015 and 2019, the current Electoral Boundaries Commission was established by the current Legislative Assembly (the 19th Assembly).

From the foregoing, it can be seen that many of the issues and concerns that one can expect to be addressed during the tenure of the present Electoral Boundaries Commission have been the subject matter of debate and discussion by the previous EBCs in 1998, 2006 and 2013 and by the members of the 13th Assembly, the 15th Assembly and 17th Assembly.







Northwest Territories
ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES
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