



CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

January 5, 2026

Secretary to the Northwest Territories Electoral Boundaries Commission  
c/o the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer  
3rd floor YK Centre East #7  
4915 – 48th Street Yellowknife NT X1A 3S4

[info@electionsnwt.ca](mailto:info@electionsnwt.ca)

Dear Northwest Territories Electoral Boundaries Commission,

**RE: Submission on Electoral Boundaries Review**

On behalf of Yellowknife City Council, I appreciate the opportunity to provide this submission on the *2025 NWT Electoral Boundaries Commission Interim Report*.

Yellowknife is proud to serve as the capital city for all residents of the Northwest Territories. As the administrative, economic, and service centre of the territory, our city plays a unique role in supporting communities across the territory and into western Nunavut. This important position comes with responsibilities that extend beyond our municipal boundaries, and it underscores the importance of ensuring that Yellowknife is fairly represented in the Legislative Assembly.

*Yellowknife residents expect representation that reflects as much as possible both their population size and their contribution to the territory. While Yellowknifers recognize the challenges of balancing geographic and community interests with representation by population across the diversity of the NWT, we believe that any approach to electoral boundary changes must increase our city's overall representation in the legislative assembly. Yellowknife continues to increase its population as a proportion of the total NWT population and any changes must acknowledge that reality as much as possible.*

### ***Yellowknife's Role as a Capital City***

Yellowknife is home to approximately 22,800 residents, representing just under 50% of the total territorial population of roughly 46,000<sup>1</sup>. This concentration of population highlights the city's importance as the economic and governance center of the Northwest Territories.

Yellowknife's role as the capital city and largest community means that Yellowknifers have responsibilities that extend far beyond our local concerns. The city hosts the Legislative Assembly, territorial government offices, and services including but not limited to social and health services that benefit all communities. Many of the challenges and opportunities in Yellowknife also exist as a result of our role as the Capital. Our unique position in terms of population and as a service centre for the NWT should be considered when determining electoral boundaries. These realities reflect a broader community of interest that includes all Northerners beyond our municipal boundaries.

### ***Principles of Representation and Key Challenges***

The Commission's four factors, as outlined in the interim report, are critical to this discussion:

- **Relative Parity:** Electoral districts should be similar in population to each other.
- **Community of Interest:** We should try and keep similar communities together.
- **Effective Representation:** Electoral districts do not need to be perfectly equal in population but should not be more than or less than 25% of the average population unless there is an unusual situation.
- **Practicable Impossibility:** Sometimes it may not be possible to meet all these guidelines without violating one of the other ones. In these unusual situations the Commission has made best efforts to come up with a reasonable solution.

Applying these factors in the Northwest Territories is challenging due to vast distances, small and dispersed communities, and diverse cultural identities. However, these challenges cannot overshadow the need to ensure that the capital and service centre of the territory has a meaningful voice within our legislative assembly. Yellowknife's significant and continuous underrepresentation when compared to our population risks undermining the principle of voter parity and the confidence of residents in the democratic process.

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<sup>1</sup> NWT Bureau of Statistics. Population Estimates by Community as of July 1, 2025.



The interim report presents four options for consideration:

- maintaining 19 constituencies with adjustments; or increasing to
- 20 constituencies, with an additional seat for Yellowknife
- 21 constituencies, with an additional seat for Yellowknife; or
- 22 constituencies, with an additional 2 seats for Yellowknife.

While the Commission has not endorsed a specific option, Yellowknife City Council believes there are only two options that should be considered.

### ***Recommendation***

Based on the factors identified by the Commission, as well as the importance noted in this letter of ensuring fair representation for Yellowknife, City Council recommends implementation of either Option 1 or Option 4.

Option 1 and Option 4 both raise the representation of Yellowknife in the Legislative Assembly from ~36% to ~42% or ~40% respectively, while also ensuring that all Yellowknife constituencies are within the range of not more or less than 25% of the average constituency population.

Option 2 and 3 of the report both miss the mark on one (Option 2) or both (Option 3) of these important metrics and do not have the support of Yellowknife City Council.

If the Commission decides to recommend another option in their final report, or if the Legislative Assembly decides to amend these options, then the benefits of Option 1 and Option 4 still need to be maintained. It is not tenable for Yellowknife to have nearly 50% of the population in our Territory and less than 40% of representation in the Legislative Assembly. It is also not acceptable to have Yellowknife districts that are underrepresented by more than the 25% target identified by the Commission to ensure effective representation.

### ***Electoral District Names***

Regarding electoral district names, Yellowknife City Council does not have a recommendation on future naming. As part of a broader commitment to reconciliation it is important to work with Indigenous Governments and Indigenous peoples to establish new or amended constituency names that will be grounded in an official language(s) other than English.



If this work toward reconciliation cannot be achieved before the end of this legislative assembly, then generic names are likely preferable. Work on appropriate naming or renaming decisions can then continue during the next legislative assembly.

***Conclusion***

In closing, we urge the Commission to uphold the principles of fairness, equity, and effective representation in its final recommendations. Yellowknife residents expect representation that reflect both their population size and their contribution to the territory as a whole.

Thank you for your dedication to this important process. We look forward to continued engagement as the review progresses. Should you have any questions or comments regarding this letter, please feel free to contact me by email: [mayor@yellowknife.ca](mailto:mayor@yellowknife.ca) or by phone: (867) 920-5693.

Sincerely,



Ben Hendriksen  
Mayor

