



# ELECTIONS NWT 2022-23 ANNUAL REPORT

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Chief Electoral Officer

# Elections NWT Annual Report 2022-23

## Introduction

During 2022-23, Elections NWT was focused on preparations for the 2023 territorial general election (TGE).

The Office of the Chief Electoral Officer (OCEO) began staffing the positions required to administer the 2023 election.

Elections NWT is also undertaking work to bring forward regulations governing the use of online voting.

## Staffing Changes

### OCEO staff

Meggin Creed moved from the Office Manager position into the Election Administrator role in June 2022. This position is responsible for the updating and maintaining of all election-related materials, from signs and posters to guides for candidates and voters and other aspects of administration of the territorial general election.

Joshua Chua joined the office in January 2023 as the Finance Officer, responsible for booking all polling locations and office space for Returning Officers, processing all pay for election workers, and keeping a detailed breakdown of election-related spending.

### Appointments of Returning Officers

A Returning Officer is responsible for the administration of the election in their electoral district, and fulfill an essential role in our democratic process. Efficient, timely and accurate elections would not be possible without the dedication and service of the Returning Officers and their teams.

Over 2022-23, several Returning Officer appointments were revoked, due to either retirements in advance of the territorial general election, or non-responsiveness. Recruitment of Returning Officers was ongoing throughout the year, leaving just one vacancy to be filled, in the electoral district of Nunakput.

The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) appointed new Returning Officers in Dehcho, Nahendeh, Range Lake, Sahtu, and Yellowknife Centre. Efforts to appoint a Returning Officer for Nunakput are ongoing at the time of this report.

<b>Electoral District</b>	<b>Returning Officer</b>
Dehcho	Berna Matto
Frame Lake	Mona Durkee
Great Slave	Carol Nychka
Hay River North	Marny Twigge
Hay River South	Heather Coakwell
Inuvik Boot Lake	Chris Garven
Inuvik Twin Lakes	Mitchell MacQuarrie
Kam Lake	Yvette Schreder
Mackenzie Delta	Grace Martin
Monfwi	Harriet Koyina
Nahendeh	Allyson Skinner
Nunakput	VACANT
Range Lake	Meag Shouhda
Sahtu	Rosalena Grandjambe
Thebacha	Lynda B. Martin
Tu Nedhé - Wiilideh	Lorraine Villeneuve
Yellowknife Centre	Joanna Grant
Yellowknife North	Amanda Mallon
Yellowknife South	Melanie Gentles

## 2023 Territorial General Election Preparations and Initiatives

In 2022-23, Elections NWT moved into actively planning for the 2023 territorial general election. Some of its key initiatives include:

### Official languages and plain language materials

One of the key lessons learned during the 2022 by-election was that Elections NWT needed to do more to ensure that materials are available in Indigenous languages. It is a key goal of the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer to have most public-facing materials available in all official languages. Throughout 2022-23, Elections NWT developed poster templates that were then translated into every official language. For the 2023 territorial election, voters should see posters in the commonly spoken languages of their communities at every polling location.

The *Guide for Voters* was redesigned into a pamphlet and has also been translated into all official languages.

Elections NWT has developed a *How to Mark Your Ballot* guide which provides instructions in all official languages of the NWT, at every polling station and returning office in the NWT.

### Online voting procedures and regulations

In March 2021, the Legislative Assembly passed a motion requiring that any future use of online voting be governed by regulations under the *Elections and Plebiscites Act*. In June 2022, the CEO of Elections NWT convened a meeting with experts in online voting, Dr. Nicole Goodman, Chancellor's Chair for Research Excellence, Associate Professor of Political Science at Brock University, and Director of the Centre for e-Democracy; and Dr. Aleksander Essex, Associate Professor of Software Engineering at Western University. They have published several key papers on online voting, both individually and collaboratively. The purpose of the meeting was to establish a path forward for Elections NWT to develop regulations governing the use of online voting for absentee ballots in future elections. The professors presented on their work, which included valuable insights into the use of online voting at the municipal level across Canada, online voting's merits and risks, and important points for consideration when deciding whether, where and when to use online voting.

Maxwell Harvey, Chief Electoral Officer of Elections Yukon, also attended, and Elections NWT and Elections Yukon have continued to collaborate on online voting governance initiatives since that initial meeting.

After this meeting, Elections NWT spent the next several months developing a draft guideline of technical requirements for online voting vendors, a business continuity plan in the event of an internet or technical failure, and a communications plan for how Elections NWT will respond and communicate in the event of any issues arising from the use of online voting in a territorial election.

The CEO received assistance in the drafting of the guidelines from the Digital Governance Standards Institute (DGSi). DGSi works to enable greater trust and confidence in Canada's digital systems through the development of technology governance standards, created by working collaboratively with a range of stakeholders, including groups from academia, private businesses and public institutions. The



Institute has been developing a technical standard for municipalities using online voting, and Elections NWT's CEO has been a member of the technical working group since October 2022.

Elections Nova Scotia also assisted, providing the technical documents they issued as part of their request for proposals for an online voting vendor to deliver absentee ballots in some instances for provincial elections. Élections Québec also provided technical documents from their procurement process when examining online voting for municipalities.

Elections Yukon hosted a follow-up meeting in March 2023, in which the Elections NWT CEO presented the guidelines, a business continuity plan, and other work. Attendees included professors Goodman and Essex, Elections Nova Scotia's Director of Information Technology, and a Senior Project Manager from the Digital Governance Standards Institute. The feedback received during this meeting was then incorporated into the development of the regulations.

### Accessibility and Polling Locations

In 2022-23, the CEO and the Deputy Chief Electoral Officer (DCEO) met with the Executive Director of the NWT Disabilities Council to discuss how Elections NWT can best reduce or eliminate barriers so that all citizens may exercise their right to vote.

Elections NWT has a checklist it uses when looking at possible polling stations. There are seven criteria that must be met:

1. Adequate parking spaces reserved for disabled persons near the main entrance;
2. A ramp to the entrance;
3. Ramps and walkways in good condition and clear of snow or other obstacles;
4. Enough room around doorways for someone in a wheelchair or using a cane/crutches/other assistance;
5. Doors that open easily or have power buttons for automatic opening;
6. A space for posting of clear signage;
7. Wheelchair-accessible washrooms and drinking fountains with appropriate fixtures.

In the event that not all criteria can be met, Elections NWT will work with the Returning Officer for the electoral district to identify solutions to ensure accessibility.

### Renewal of Datafix contract

The Register of Territorial Electors (ROTE) is the permanent record of territorial electors maintained by Elections NWT. The official voters list for an electoral event is drawn from ROTE. In 2016, Elections NWT signed a five-year contract with DataFix, an Ontario company that specializes in election management systems. Their proprietary internet-based system has specific capabilities that include:

- providing election officers with an online view of electoral information, including the ability to make additions, revisions and corrections to the ROTE;
- a candidate access portal, where forms and voting information can be found;
- absentee ballot support, including label printing; and
- technical support.

Given the specialized nature of the services, most election management bodies in Canada now use DataFix as an election partner. In March 2023, the Chief Electoral Officer renewed the contract with DataFix for an eight-year term as the longer period allowed for a better overall price.

### Staffing for the election

As part of the budget development process for the 2023 election, the need for several temporary positions was identified.

A **finance officer**: to deal with all the bookings for polling locations and returning offices; payroll for election workers; and ensuring candidate's have complied with the financial requirements of the Act.

A **communications officer**, to respond to inquiries from the public and the media in the lead-up to the election; to refresh and update website content and any other communications materials such as guides and handouts; to develop an active communications plan; to monitor and proactively post information on the website and social media;

An **election operations officer**: to prepare and assemble the various poll kits required for election day; to act as the absentee ballot coordinator; and to lead the updating of the Register of Territorial Electors.

### Learning Management System (LMS)

During a review of election materials used in the previous election it was noted that changes were needed for most of the materials. One of these updates was to the Learning Management System (LMS) and Election Officer training materials. All the materials were reviewed, and changes were made to make sure the materials were up to date, straight forward, easy to understand and not cumbersome for the learner. In the 2019 version of the LMS there was a lot of "clicking" to get to the next page, large video files, and other issues that we saw as being roadblocks to learning, specifically in the smaller communities where internet connectivity can be unreliable. Information in the modules targeted relevant information that the Returning Officers and was designed in a slideshow style so users didn't have so many "clicks" to get to the next slide. We utilized some of the instructional videos that were created for the 2019 LMS and quizzes were added to test the learner's knowledge. The purpose of the LMS is to be an overview of election processes and compliments the materials found in the Election Officers Manual. This system will be used to provide the online portion of the training required for all Returning Officers, Assistant Returning Officers and Additional Assistant Returning Officers. It will also be released in a condensed version to Deputy Returning Officers when they are hired closer to the election date.

### Other Work

During 2022-23, the other activities which the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer took part in include:

#### *Canadian Conference of Election Officials 2022*

The annual conference of Chief Electoral Officers occurred in July 2022, hosted by Elections Nunavut in Iqaluit. The themes of the discussion were advancing reconciliation/enhancing Indigenous experiences in electoral democracy, and electoral democracy in a polarized society.

### *Ontario Provincial Election Visitor Program*

Elections Ontario hosted a Visitor Program for the 2022 provincial election. This three-day event was an opportunity for the CEO to meet most of the other Chief Electoral Officers in Canada, numerous international observers from the National Electoral Institute of Mexico, the United States Electoral Commission, and the Electoral Commission of South Africa, among others. The program included a detailed presentation by Elections Ontario on their preparations for the election, as well as attending various polling stations and returning offices on election day.

### *Ontario Municipal Election Visitor Program*

Elections NWT was invited to be part of a visitor's program hosted by the Delian Project, a non-government organization that brings together stakeholders from the electoral sector to better support emerging democracies. The Deputy CEO attended this program, which focused on the Ontario municipal election. The program included visits to Burlington, Newmarket and Vaughan. These elections were administered using online voting, tablet voting at the polls and counts done with tabulators, which were of interest as we headed into an election year.

### *Amendments to the Elections and Plebiscites Act*

Following the Legislative Assembly's review of the CEO's Auxiliary Report, several amendments to the *Elections and Plebiscites Act* were developed, in response to both the Auxiliary Report and the earlier Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures Report on the Administration of the 2019 Territorial Election. The CEO worked with the legislative drafters on Bill 59, which was introduced on October 20, 2022, and received assent on November 3, 2022.

### *Secretariat for Electoral Coordination*

In addition to regular work on engagement and outreach, the CEO is a member of the Secretariat for Electoral Coordination (SEC) Steering Committee, which supports the development of modern and innovative electoral processes in Canada, as the representative of the three territorial election agencies. The DCEO co-chairs the SEC Enhancing Indigenous Experiences sub-committee, aiming to improve how election management bodies engage with and enhance the overall experience of Indigenous electors and staff. The Elections Administrator represents Elections NWT at the SEC subcommittee for Voters with Disability subcommittee, exploring best practices and areas for improvement with other Canadian election agencies.



## Budget

	Budget	Actuals	Variance
Permanent Salaries	519,000	447,424	71,576
Casual Wages		36,230	-36,230
Employee Related Costs		44,016	-44,016
<b>Total C&amp;B</b>	<b>519,000</b>	<b>527,670</b>	<b>-8,670</b>
Travel & Transport	15,000	32,141	-17,141
Materials and Supplies	31,000	1,769	29,231
Purchased Services	11,000	11,509	-509
Contract Services	69,000	29,783	39,217
Fees & Payments	50,000	6,009	-1,009
Other - TSC Chargeback	0	0	0
Controllable Assets	0	1,257	-1,257
Computer Hard/Software	0	798	-798
<b>Total Other Expenses</b>	<b>131,000</b>	<b>83,266</b>	<b>47,734</b>
<b>TOTAL OFFICE OF THE CEO</b>	<b>650,000</b>	<b>610,936</b>	<b>39,064</b>

English

French

Cree

Tt<sub>1</sub>chq

Chipewyan

## South Slavey

## North Slavey

Gwich'in

Inuvialuktun

Inuktitut

Inuinnaqtun

info@electionsnwt.ca

