



15th Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories

Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures

Report on the Review
of the Report of the
Chief Electoral Officer
on the Administration
of the 2003 General Election

Chair: Mr. Bill Braden, MLA

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SPEAKER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Speaker:

Your Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures is pleased to provide its Report on the Review of the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Administration of the 2003 General Election and commends it to the House.

Bill Braden, MLA
Chairperson

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON
RULES AND PROCEDURES**

**REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE
REPORT OF THE CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER
ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE
2003 GENERAL ELECTION**

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The Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures conducted a public review of the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the Administration of the 2003 General Election over the course of three months from November 4, 2004 to January 26, 2005.

The Committee met first with the Chief Electoral Officer in November and solicited public feedback through extensive advertising in northern newspapers before convening again on January 26th to consider submissions.

There were no respondents. The Committee then met with the Acting Chief Electoral Officer to give final consideration to the report and its recommendations.

The Report's recommendations and the Committee's comments and endorsements are as follows:

Recommendation:

That the *Elections Act* be amended to provide that the first Monday in October be the permanent Election Day in the Northwest Territories.

There was broad support on Committee for setting a permanent election date. There was some discussion on whether the first Monday of October was the appropriate date, but the advantages of better weather and daylight during the campaign; avoiding conflict with municipal elections dates and the certainty of a fixed election date for planning purposes for the GNWT and any prospective candidate outweigh the disadvantages.

The one downside that was identified by Committee was that once every four years the Legislative Assembly would lose the ability to do a comprehensive review of the Government's Business Plans.

The Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures endorses the first Monday of October as the permanent Territorial Election Day.

Recommendation:

That a comprehensive review of the *Elections Act* be undertaken and a new *Act* be presented to the Legislative Assembly for consideration; and

That the *Plebiscite Act* be repealed and that provisions for the administration of plebiscites and referendums be integrated into the new *Elections Act*.

The Committee noted the *Elections Act* has been amended several times and is in need of update and consolidation. Committee agrees with the recommendation to repeal the *Plebiscite Act* and consolidate its provisions in the new *Elections Act*.

While the *Plebiscite Act* has been used rarely, the last time in 1992, it is almost identical to the *Elections Act*. For administrative and reference purposes its inclusion as a separate section of the *Elections Act* is recommended.

The Committee endorses the rewriting of the *Elections Act* and the consolidation of the *Plebiscite Act* into the new *Elections Act*.

Recommendation:

That the Chief Electoral Officer, in partnership with the Legislative Assembly and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, develop a web-based interactive educational site and curriculum on election participation for use in the schools.

Members note that electoral participation in the Northwest Territories is traditionally higher than mainstream Canada, particularly in small communities. However, recent studies in southern Canada show that young people's participation in the electoral process has declined dramatically. We need to encourage young people to vote and exercise their franchise.

The Committee endorses the development of educational programs that encourage voter participation by young people.

Recommendation:

That a review be undertaken to consider the efficiencies and sharing of resources that could occur with the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer assuming the administrative responsibility for elections of community governments under the *Local Authorities Election Act*.

The Committee notes that the expertise exists in the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer to assume the administrative responsibility for the municipal elections. With the exception of once every four years, when the Territorial Election occurs, Members do not see a reason existing staff could not administer municipal elections.

The Committee endorses the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer examining the potential for taking on the responsibility for the administration of municipal elections.

OTHER ISSUES DISCUSSED

Many of the issues that Members heard expressed during the last Election Campaign, such as lowering the voting age to sixteen, electing a Premier at large and tightening up candidates' residency and eligibility requirements are outside the scope of this Report and may possibly be addressed during the legislative process that will occur with reviewing the *Elections Act*.

Some Members noted the interpretation of the provisions of the current legislation relating to the access of candidates to apartment buildings during elections are too literal and need to be clarified, so that candidates' access to the electorate is not impeded during the campaign period.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Standing Committee on Rules and Procedures gratefully acknowledges the advice, assistance and cooperation of the former Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. David Hamilton, and the Acting Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Glen McLean, in the course of our review.

APPENDIX A