



February 23, 2021

MR. RYLUND JOHNSON
MLA, YELLOWKNIFE NORTH

Oral Question 511-19(2): Alternative Voting Methods for Communities

This letter is in follow up to the Oral Question you raised in the House on February 05, 2021, regarding alternative voting methods for community government elections.

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) continues to work closely with the Northwest Territories Association of Communities (NWTAC) as a primary stakeholder to identify and support their priorities; aligning their interests with the department's priorities as much as possible. In addition to their annual general meetings, MACA meets with the NWTAC Board and the board of the Local Government Administrators of the NWT on a regular basis to engage on Departmental activities and receive input on where the department can improve its programs and services as well as receiving input on matters such as legislative priorities. This engagement informs the Department on how to best focus on the issues that are most important to community governments.

To date, interest in advancing options for online or telephone voting has not been brought forward to MACA by the NWTAC Board membership or any specific community since the resolution was first raised in 2018.

As previously noted in the House, the Gwich'in Tribal Council (GTC) have permitted the use of online and phone in voting in their recent elections. MACA staff have had initial discussions with the GTC's election officials on the processes allowed for the alternative methods used in these elections. I can further share the following information on the two alternative voting processes utilized in the 2016 and 2020 GTC elections.

- The 2016 GTC election made use of a mobile phone voting application, as well as an online option. This process still required that physical mailouts be sent out to the community membership in order for them to vote electronically. The GTC also stationed in-person voting stations in each participating community, alongside mobile polling, for individuals who resided outside the Gwich'in Settlement Area (GSA).

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- The 2020 GTC election used an improved electronic records management system for online voting. This system included a record of the voter list to assist in the electronic voting process and allowed for individuals who resided outside the GSA to vote online. Members living outside the GSA accounted for approximately 32 percent of the overall membership. The remaining members could register to vote online if they were unable to vote during the advance poll or on the election day. Final statistics demonstrated low uptake of the electronic system; very few individuals chose to vote online, and the majority chose to vote in-person at a polling station.

Legislative review of the *Local Authorities Elections Act (LAEA)* has not been identified as a priority of the 19th Assembly. I have, however, directed that MACA review how and where on-line voting is used throughout Canada in order to inform a conversation with the NWTAC in the near future, possibly as soon as during the NWTAC Annual General Meeting scheduled for late February. MACA can commit to providing an update to Members of the Legislative Assembly particularly if the discussion on alternative voting methods or amendments to the *LAEA* indicate a renewed interest at the community government level.

Thank you for your interest and advocacy on this issue.

Sincerely,



Paulie Chinna
Minister
Municipal and Community Affairs

- c. Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Legislative Coordinator, Executive and Indigenous Affairs
Deputy Minister, Municipal and Community Affairs