

North

## Elections Yukon head cites 'growing risk' of foreign interference, says report in the works

Chief electoral officer says no evidence of election interference in Yukon, but it warrants study

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A Whitehorse polling station during the last Yukon territorial election on April 12, 2021. Yukon's chief electoral officer calls potential election interference 'a matter of shared interest and common focus for all jurisdictions.' (Mark Kelly/The Canadian Press)

Yukon's chief electoral officer says he's preparing a report that looks at how to protect the territory's elections from potential foreign interference.

"While there is no evidence of foreign intervention in Yukon elections, it is a growing risk that must be recognized and managed," wrote Maxwell Harvey, in a letter last week to Premier Ranj Pillai.

Harvey was writing in response to an earlier letter from the premier, asking Harvey to look at the issue and make any recommendations "with respect to guaranteeing the security of the territory's elections."

Pillai also said that he knew of no evidence for foreign interference in a Yukon election, but he cited "recent conversations on the national stage," as the reason for his request.

"This is an opportune moment for Elections Yukon to describe what policies and procedures exist to protect our elections from foreign interference," Pillai wrote on Mar. 9.

Last week, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tapped former governor general David Johnston [to investigate claims that China meddled](#) in Canada's last two elections.

Also last week, B.C. Premier David Eby said he's "very troubled" by [allegations of Chinese government interference in Vancouver's municipal elections](#) last year and he's asked Canada's intelligence agency for a briefing.

## 'Common focus for all jurisdictions'

Harvey's letter to the premier, tabled in the Legislative Assembly, called election interference "a matter of shared interest and common focus for all jurisdictions."

"This has been an area of interest to me over the years from both the national and the Yukon context," he wrote.



Chief electoral officer Maxwell Harvey outside the Yukon government building in 2020. Harvey expects to have a report on election interference ready by next month. (Steve Silva/CBC)

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Harvey told the premier that Elections Yukon was already in the process of producing a report on foreign interference and aims to have it done by late April. The report will look at things such as potential legislative changes, organizational changes, or monitoring and enforcement measures.

"While foreign election interference is the current focus, the remedies would also be applicable to domestic interference vulnerabilities and consider additional transparency and enforcement options," Harvey wrote.

He also pointed out that other recommendations from Elections Yukon to update parts of the Elections Act have gone nowhere.

"Recommendations have been stalled or dismissed without follow up by the Members' Services Board or Executive Council Office. If Elections Act changes are needed, a corresponding willingness, commitment, and priority to make the necessary legislative change are required," he wrote.

Harvey also points to one legislative change that he favours. He notes that unlike things such as the Child and Youth Advocate Act and the Ombudsman Act, which are administered by the all-party legislative assembly, Yukon's election laws are administered by the government.

- [Foreign interference is the 'greatest strategic threat' facing Canada's national security, CSIS says](#)
- [Trudeau calls David Johnston 'unimpeachable' as Conservatives attack his impartiality](#)

"This outlier assignment is problematic and different from the other independent house offices," he wrote.

"The Elections Act and the Electoral District Boundaries Act should be administered by the Legislative Assembly to ensure complete independence from government."

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