

Caroline Wawzonek – candidate for Yellowknife South

**1. A \$40 million shortfall still exists for community governments. What is your position on the funding formula for community governments and the significant shortfall not being addressed over the past five years? And 2. What steps will you take to ensure that communities funding shortfall as identified by MACA is addressed and do you commit to prioritizing funding?**

It should be seen as a strong show of collaboration that the GNWT through MACA and the municipalities as represented by the NWTAC came together and determined a reasonable formula for community funding. Failing to follow through on that agreement erodes trust between governments that need to work together for communities to thrive. The gap has been reduced but those reductions appear to be ad hoc, rather than by following a plan that would allow for better long-term budget planning on both sides. I would commit to support a plan to bring funding in line with the 2014 formula.

Without knowing the potentially competing priorities of other MLAs or the complete picture for the next budget, it is irresponsible to say that the funding gap will be fully resolved within one budget cycle. I would support an approach that would see a gradual correction over the term of the Assembly.

**3. Homelessness, mental health and addictions are serious issues in the North. Are you willing to work to ensure these issues get addressed and potential solutions put in place in a timely manner?**

Yes.

I will first describe my overall approach to these issues then provide specific ideas related to mental health and addictions as well as homelessness.

I think we need political leadership to acknowledge that **many social issues are connected**. For example, addictions can result in housing insecurity just as homelessness can impact addiction. I think we also need leaders to be realistic that many of **these issues will not have just one solution** and leaders need to be prepared to put forward more than one solution in order to make real progress. For example, the challenge in housing is not only at the point of homelessness but is a challenge of housing insecurity across a range of housing needs. In some cases, people require not only a roof but staff support to help them to live independently. I think it is important for decision makers to acknowledge the connections and complexities so they can come up with **meaningful long-term solutions** and **prioritize cooperation** across departments and between governments.

I believe in leading by example: political leadership needs to be **aware of the needs of front lines** of service delivery. I believe leaders should demonstrate that they understand what is happening at the front lines and, in doing so, that they expect chains of communication between all levels to be open and healthy. Front line service providers often know the best, easiest and most efficient improvements for service delivery.

I also believe in **fostering communication and collaboration**. I would encourage regular meetings between different segments of social programs including those within government as well as the many

non-profit organizations delivery government funded programs. For example, semi-annual meetings for Income Assistance service officers, their supervisors and managers with their counterparts in Housing and Child and Family Services along with the community advocates who work with people accessing all of these programs. Also, the existing Integrated Case Management pilot program appears to be a successful way for people to more efficiently access government programs and services. Expanding the intake to non-profit organizations could reach more people who need these supports.

#### **A response specific to homelessness**

I support the proposed project to purchase the Arnica Inn and convert it into transitional housing. The proposal, led by the Yellowknife Women's Society, would provide half of the spaces called for in the City of Yellowknife's 10-year plan to end homelessness and fill a need for housing with built-in support for the residents. I understand that the City has already moved forward to re-zone the area and the Federal government is providing 75% of the cost. I believe the GNWT should support this collaboration with the City and one of our well-established non-profit organizations.

I also want to see the GNWT work with the YWCA to respond to the gap in transitional housing for families that resulted from the Rockhill fire.

#### **A response specific to mental health and addictions**

My platform includes support for post-treatment, long term aftercare for addictions and mental health that includes relapse-prevention and community-based support networks. I know that some of these kinds of programs are starting to take shape in the mental health action plan released this past spring. I want to see this approach to long-term recovery continue.

Other potential responses:

- In order to help build and maintain community-level networks, I suggest renewing efforts to establish mobile units of mental health professionals to circulate regularly to communities and support local networks.
- I believe we need mental health-specific system navigators or patient-advocates (or perhaps both) so that patients and their families access the most appropriate and best available programs and services.
- Consider piloting a harm reduction-based response to addictions to provide as many options and alternatives as possible to encourage people towards healthier choices.

#### **4. How do you think communities can prepare for the climate change crisis that is presently occurring in many communities and what is your position on the Territorial Government finding solutions and taking a leadership role with funding?**

Northern Canada is experiencing more dramatic and more immediate impacts from a warming climate as compared to the rest of Canada. This has a major impact on community infrastructure including roads,

buildings, water sources and traditional food sources. With a large geography, small population and much smaller tax base, responding to these challenges is especially difficult for the northern Territories.

I believe that the GNWT should take a leading role coordinating a response by identifying best practices to protect existing infrastructure and look for designs that will last into the future. I believe the GNWT should lead an effort to include analysis of the impact of climate change on communities and Territory-wide infrastructure in order to be able to include these risks in current and future planning. Having plans in place will help plan our needs for research, personnel and budgets.

I also believe we should try to use these challenges as an opportunity. In moving forward with a polytechnical university institution, I believe the NWT should be taking a leading role in initiating and supporting relevant research on climate science and related fields.

**5. What are your views on the issue of the early childhood education deficiency in the NWT and how it relates to post-secondary success of students and do you support an Auditor General Review of the education system?**

I strongly believe that early childhood education is a key component to ensuring a prosperous NWT. Strong early childhood foundations in health and education are building blocks to lifelong learning and critical to the growth of an innovative and skilled workforce.

In 2010, the Auditor General conducted a review of the NWT education system. In response, ECE researched and developed the Education Renewal and Innovation Framework (“Framework”). The Framework included a “scan of northern, Canadian and international education research” and reflects a shift towards educational success built on relationships to engage learners in the materials they are learning. It also includes an awareness that educational success requires healthy and safe living environments.

The Framework includes a multi year plan that is not yet complete. I understand that pilot programs are only beginning to produce data for evaluation. I believe we need to gather data from these pilots and make sure that changes are in fact the best practices relevant to the NWT going forward.

I also believe we need to invest in teachers and school administrators who are responsible for delivering the Framework’s many goals to students. The success of educational renewal depends on teachers who have the tools and skills to connect with their students and engage them in learning starting in early childhood. It also means having teachers with the time to connect with their students. We might need to reconsider funding that was moved into staff to teach teachers instead of education assistants supporting teachers in classrooms.

Finally, I support moving forward on the last Assembly’s promise to explore a move towards universal childcare. Support for universal childcare was in the mandate of the last Assembly and in a 2019-2022 Action Plan but it is not clear that anything happened to identify potential ways forward. Lack of available or affordable childcare takes up tremendous energy in families and creates workforce barriers. Having more options, up to and including the game-changing possibility of universal childcare, would help reduce

the cost of living, positively impact the labor force and could help provide young children with more foundations for early education.

There are three reasons that I would not immediately support requesting another Auditor General's review: 1) the GNWT, and more specifically our schools and teachers, are only part way through the delivery of the Education Renewal Initiative that was the response to the 2010 Auditor General's review. Inaction on education would be inexcusable but impatience does not create better policy; 2) I think we should direct our efforts and funds to invest in the process that we are already partially through and support teacher and classroom success rather than starting over; and 3) an Auditor General's review focuses on the systems and processes, not necessarily the content such as curriculum. In the last review, it was found that there was a lack of accountability within the system for outcomes. I support having a midway internal review of whether we have achieved the recommendations in the last review.

**6. The 2018 Federal Budget affirmed that its expectation is that a 25% portion of the revenues from cannabis excise taxes provided to the Territory and Provinces be transferred to municipalities and local communities. What is your view of the GNWT deciding that there will be no revenues passed on to the municipalities from the Territorial Government?**

Based on media reports earlier this year, it appears that cannabis has not been nearly as profitable as expected. As such, I would want to ensure that any administrative burden to share profits does not cost more than the amounts being shared.

At the time that this legislation was before a Standing Committee, and in my role at the NWT Chamber of Commerce, I advocated for more opportunities for the private business sector to become involved in the sale and marketing of cannabis products in the NWT. If the GNWT wants to increase profits, it may be time to listen to the business community who are interested entrepreneurial opportunities in this industry.