

**Cory Vanthuyne - Yellowknife North**

September 17, 2019

In reply to NWT Association of Communities – Questions for MLA Candidates Election 2019:

(Answers in number sequence to each question received)

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?

**Answer:** The GNWT's approach to re-balancing funding, so far, has been to hold funding steady for small communities that are overfunded, while increasing funding over time to those that are underfunded, like Yellowknife. While this is an approach that will reduce the shock to small communities finances, commitments need to be made with respect to how long it will take to achieve a fair balance. As things stand right now, this issue represents a hidden subsidy from large communities to small ones. If re-elected on October 1st, I will push for a firm commitment to an accelerated timeline for achieving infrastructure funding fairness.

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?

**Answer:** I have and will continue to advocate for increasing the contribution to communities in order to overcome the funding gap while, as noted above, working toward fairness for all communities. Regular members asked for a \$3.3 million-dollar contribution to this gap in the last budget only to have it rejected by cabinet. If re-elected I will propose and seek support to have a long-term contribution made annually to toward lessening the funding gap.

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?

**Answer:** In Yellowknife for example we have seen good between the GNWT and City in recent years to work together and introduce new services and programming. Housing First, Street Outreach Services and support for programs like the Arctic Indigenous Wellness Fund are making a difference but wait lists for housing keep growing and addictions issues seem more visible now than ever before in our city's past. I firmly believe that a managed alcohol program can make a difference and must be tried during the next four years,

preferably in conjunction with the construction of a new, expanded Day Shelter and Sobering Centre (Centre for Vulnerable People).

We must work with other communities to develop custom programs to suit their unique needs on these important issues. Close co-operation must continue to be encouraged, in no small part because much of the new funding available through the federal government is only accessible through such partnerships. At the same time, let's not lose sight of the fact that housing and social services comprise a significant part of the GNWT's mandate. While I appreciate the incredible commitment of the communities, the GNWT must step up and re-affirm its leadership on these files.

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?

**Answer:** The NWT has territorial and national carbon emission targets to meet as part of our commitment to the Pan Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate change. The primary way to meet these targets is to reduce and replace the use of fossil fuels. In the diesel communities we can make a big difference by getting off the large diesel generators that run full bore 24-7-365 and start to replace them with hybrid systems that could include, variable speed generators, windmills, solar panels, biomass and biodiesel. And we can build co-generation systems that allow the community to use the one automated system to generate power, heating and cooling. The technology is already available. The GNWT needs to work with the communities and innovative companies like ATCO and SSI Energy to plan, fund and implement these systems when the current old systems come to the end of their useful life, and we can leverage considerable federal funding as well to help fund these types of initiatives as well.

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?

**Answer:** I recognize that high quality early education and child care programs directly impact children's healthy development. Unfortunately, the Early Development Instrument (EDI) shows that early development, particularly in small communities, is significantly less than optimal. Our vulnerability is more than 50% than that of the rest of Canada. Early childhood development programs that promote equity must be accessible and affordable to all communities and families. At present, the administrative requirements attached to the Early Childhood Program funding are deemed to be time consuming and administratively burdensome for both the operators and the program managers. We need to have a renewed approach to funding early childhood programs and commit ECE to undertake a review of the administrative and funding processes of the Early Childhood

Program. By streamlining the steps involved to simplify the administrative and financial processes, programs will be less burdened by paperwork and better able to promote equity, inclusion and quality to make a positive difference in children's lives.

Naturally, a well established and funded early childcare program leads to well-developed youth that will have a much better chance to succeed in post-secondary opportunities as well as in all aspects of life, eventually becoming healthy strong knowledgeable contributors to society.

I do not support an Auditor General Review of the education system at this time. We have some good initiatives that have taken place in recent years that we should now properly assess and evaluate to see what positive steps we can take to invest in improvements and develop new policy so that we are actively modernizing our education system. A couple examples are following through with Educational Renewal Action Plan and following through on the recommendations of the Aurora College review and the new Vision for Post-Secondary Education. I am happy that we renewed our Education Act and we should now also see how regulation and policy will improve from that. An Auditor General review would not be appropriate at this time in my view.

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?

**Answer:** I am not overly familiar with this matter but I am open to considering this. I think if municipalities want to take the lead in their communities for education and awareness on the uses and effects of cannabis, because they know their communities best, then I would support funding going toward those types of initiatives and programs. Beyond that I would want to keep the general legislation and regulations around cannabis sales and retail businesses with the GNWT for the meantime until we have had enough time to make meaningful observations and measure actual data so we can better determine how the GNWT can evaluate the impacts legalized cannabis is having on our society and we will need human and financial resources to undertake that.