

Gaeleen MacPherson for Yellowknife South MLA

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?

Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) and the NWT Association of Communities (NWTAC) did an excellent job in 2014 of re-evaluating the community government funding formula, tying it more closely to the actual physical infrastructure in communities. I'm in favour of modernizing the funding formula for communities to better reflect the mounting pressures faced by community governments including the need to build and maintain essential municipal infrastructure.

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?

I would work with all other MLAs to ensure that this is included as one of the priorities set for the 19th Legislative 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?

Absolutely. A lot of good work has been done recently by the City of Yellowknife, the GNWT and the Federal Government to pilot new programs like Housing First. But more must be done. Partners like the Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation and the Arnica Project deserve support and we need a renewed commitment to providing local addictions treatment options.

It is important that we build on the great work that has been done to date. As MLA, I would be committed to bringing together government, other potential funders and stakeholders to develop and implement a broader homelessness strategy.

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?

It is clear that climate change is impacting northern communities and residents. We need to put more emphasis on the design and operation of our buildings and infrastructure based on the changes we are experiencing from climate change.

On a territorial level, we can't simply add more taxes or fees to make the cost of living in the NWT even more expensive. We need to make additional investments in renewable energy, such as wind, solar and biomass, both in the short and long-term. More importantly, we need to work with the next federal government to expand our hydroelectric capacity. A grid interconnect between the North and **South**

Slave regions, and ultimately between the NWT and the Southern Canadian grid will be one of my top priorities if elected. This will help to lessen our impact on the environment and to reduce our high cost of living.

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?

Although many Northerners are successful in our school system, our graduation rates continue to trail those in Southern Canada. NWT students have more classroom hours of study than most in the country, but our results still lag behind. I believe we need to invest in more teachers to keep our class sizes manageable, but also in hiring more Teaching Assistants who can work with those students who require more support.

I would be in favour of a targeted, focused review that provided recommendations early in the life of the 19th Legislative Assembly.

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?

As I noted in answer #1, I'm in favour of modernizing the funding formula for communities to better reflect the mounting pressures faced by community governments including the need to build and maintain essential municipal infrastructure. This formula should consider all sources of revenues, including the cannabis excise taxes.