

Jan Vallillee - Yellowknife North

September 12, 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?

This is a large shortfall and it is important that our community governments are sufficiently resourced to provide quality services to their residents. As an elected leader, it is my commitment to reviewing the resources and spending of the GNWT to ensure that we give the appropriate support to community governments.

I understand that the majority of this shortfall is in capital, this highlights the importance of making strategic capital investments. I think the GNWT should be looking at this shortfall as a priority, but municipal and aboriginal governments also need to take responsibility. I am very focused on controlling the cost of living in the NWT and we need a commitment from all levels of government to make this happen.

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 am in this for my constituents and all residents of the NWT, I will start from day 1 of this government to do my homework and get up to speed on the budget and priorities. Community government funding is a priority, but in addition to funding, we need to ensure inter-departmental relationships are deeper and more cooperative. It is highly likely there are programs that can be combined between departments. We need to do a better job working together, not against one another vying for the limited funds available.

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?

There is an urgent need to invest in more public housing. The waiting list is unacceptable. Funds are urgently needed to help address this initiative so we must engage the Federal government for more funds.

We need to work together and partner with the City to help our homeless. We can employ the homeless to help build a better community. The NWT Housing Corporation can partner up with Habitat for Humanity and the City to collectively address the needs. We need to have more engaged partnerships with YWCA and the Housing First initiative,

YK Association for Community Living, Salvation Army, Center for Northern Families, Side Door Youth, and Hope's Haven, to name a few. Collectively we can better serve the homeless population.

We also need to integrate our housing, health and education programs to tackle this problem holistically. I will advocate for monitoring and improvements to the proposed on-the-land recovery program to battle addictions for all residents with additional support systems in place post-recovery. Post-treatment is key to improving the success rate of those brave enough to enter recovery. We can partner with and engage organizations to utilize the expertise of existing groups for a northern tailored solution. We have to investigate jurisdictions outside of the NWT and Canada that have demonstrated proven solutions to addictions. It's time to think outside the box.

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?

I definitely think the Territorial Government should be a leader in climate change. We are at the forefront of climate change and are seeing it firsthand at a faster rate than everywhere else, except Antarctica and other circumpolar regions. I see a variety of roles for the government from funding, incentives, research and our own capital projects.

We need to be more diligent with our science and researchers to ensure any major investments (buildings/roads/highways) do not become a boondoggle. We must offer more rebates for those choosing renewable energy solutions for their homes and businesses. We are surrounded by viable sources for a wood pellet industry. The Taltson Hydroelectric project can ensure a cleaner energy source for all, including the Slave Geological Province Corridor. We can sell excess energy production to the southern grid. This will reduce the extensive volume of non renewable energy required to operate the mines and drastically reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. With cheaper energy, it might be possible to extend mine life and it will certainly aid in enticing more exploration.

A more affordable power and (possible) transportation system for the Slave Geological Province Corridor would help attract exploration companies, provide a more affordable solution for existing mines and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. The transportation system needs to be scrutinized in depth, cost/benefit analysis. If there is a limited life expectancy of the existing diamond mines, an all season road is not a wise capital investment.

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 do believe that the early years for children are critical to their development. If we can provide a better start for our children we can help avoid the serious problems that are taxing our social systems. I already spoke to the seriousness of housing, addictions and mental health in our society. More investment in early childhood education can help us to avoid the huge costs later in life.

I do believe that GNWT programs need to be reviewed to ensure that we are funded properly and getting the intended results. This is an area that we don't necessarily need an Auditor General Review. We should be engaging our own experts – teachers, parents, health workers – to work out our own Northern solutions.

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?

This is an area that needs more time and study before making a decision. Cannabis has only been legal for less than a year and we need to see what the revenue amounts from taxation are. We also need to see if there are any unanticipated consequences of legalization.

If the amounts are minimal, it does not make any sense to break it into smaller portions for communities and the GNWT may be able to use it to better serve the whole population. I also think that the Territorial Government has a larger role with cannabis from regulations to education to health, so it might be better to reinvest the taxation dollars back into those systems. However, if the amounts from cannabis taxation are significant, then I would support a portion going back to communities. This has been successfully done with the Gas Tax program.