

Wilfred JR McNeely for Sahtu MLA  
Fort Good Hope, NT

September 8, 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?**

As a recent Chief/Mayor of Fort Good Hope, I worked in an environment where shortage of funds was a constant issue, and I am in favour of having parity with government. The community government worked with not enough funds for all aspects and it makes it very difficult to accomplish goals. Community members get upset when programs and services are cut, fuel and power rates steadily increase, we can't retain workers and/or provide training, and when/if they do obtain training they will acquire government jobs that the local governments cannot compete with. These are just some of the problems I saw while working in my Chief position for three terms.

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?**

We need to make all MLAs aware of this problem; awareness will bring this issue to the forefront and get the government to help our communities. We need to work together and create a plan to bring about success; all working to one goal. Together, we could create a strategy to increase funds over a period that is achievable and assist communities to succeed in delivering their programs by ensuring they have the proper training to carry it out.

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?**

Homelessness, mental health, and addictions are very big issues in the North and we need to find different ways to address it. Saying there is no money is just not acceptable. We have to find solutions, set goals with frontline workers, and put action rather than just words. We need a rehabilitation centre in the North; so many people are suffering and I see it every day in my home community. This issue is very important to me.

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?**

Communities cannot work on climate change crisis with what funds they currently receive. In my recent position it was addressed to government officials, because our elders were always bringing up the changes they see, such as fish migration, the permafrost, animal behavior, and water levels. We can learn from Traditional Knowledge and it should be incorporated along with scientific knowledge to find solutions on how to manage the problems that arise from a changing climate.

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 agree that an Auditor General Review of our education system should be conducted. We can be doing more to bring about success of our students and the foundation in early childhood is key.

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?**

All revenue from cannabis excise taxes should be passed to communities, as this would help with the shortage of funding problem. There may be a criteria on how it is spent so it could address problems such as homelessness or addiction issues in the community. Other ideas are training, employment and housing needs.

I thank the NWT Association of Communities for this opportunity.

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