

Rommel Silverio for Kam Lake MLA

September 15, 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?

In 2014, MACA identified more than just a funding gap, it identified a funding imbalance, with larger communities like Yellowknife, Hay River and Inuvik receiving less than their fair share, while many smaller communities are receiving more than they need to maintain their assets. Another way to look at this imbalance is that larger communities are subsidizing smaller ones. In Yellowknife the imbalance works out to \$10 million per year. To put that in perspective, the entire capital budget for 2019 is about \$20 million. If elected I will seek a commitment from cabinet to both increase funding to communities and re-balance it.

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 will be committed to champion this in the assembly and work with other MLAs in support of not only addressing the funding gap but increasing the funding to communities and rebalancing it. As a sitting city councillor, I understand the challenges faced by the community government because of limited resources and working with colleagues to help close the funding gap is one of my priorities.

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?

I am willing to work to ensure that these issues are addressed in a timely manner. There has been efforts made to address these social issues such as the collective efforts on a sobering centre. But we don't stop there, we continue to find better alternatives of its location and the programs that for homelessness and addictions. I'd like to see a detox centre and a facility to cater those young people suffering from mental health conditions.

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?

The 2030 NWT Climate Change Strategic Framework has been developed to provide the mechanism on how the government plans to take action on climate change crisis. The government should commit to ensuring less dependence on fossil fuels for energy thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions and transition towards the use of green alternatives or renewable energy. It is important to educate people and the communities about climate change, what are the causes, and its effects that we see now, and what are yet to come and build capacity and resilience in the communities. The government will need to ensure climate change is a priority and funding and resources are allocated properly make the necessary decisions to address the impacts of climate change.

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 support an Auditor General Review of the education system to examine if the matrix and expected level of performance from the department in planning, implementing, and reporting are achieved, and the results are reported back to the assembly and to the public. The 0-5 years of a child's life are when the most important developmental stages happen. The government should continue its commitment to increase the number of qualified early childhood development professionals in licensed program. I support scholarships offered to those post-secondary students who are enrolled in early childhood education and funding the college in delivering certificate programs in early childhood development.

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?

In an FAQ document published on cannabis legalization in the GNWT website, it says that the Territorial government does not expect significant tax revenues from the legalization of cannabis because the tax rate is kept low to remain competitive and try to eliminate the existing black market. If the excise tax revenues remain low and maintained at the territorial level to promote public health education, I think this is acceptable. However, if revenue levels will change over time, this may need to be re-visited as municipalities and local governments need the funding due to them to help in the delivery of core services to the residents.