

Questions for MLA candidates - Election 2019

On behalf of the NWT Association of Communities, please accept these Questions for Member of Legislative Assembly Candidates about issues important to communities in the Northwest Territories. We would greatly appreciate your response to these questions by September 13th, 2019.

We intend to post all candidate responses to the following questions on our webpage and will follow up with the elected members throughout the term of the 19th Assembly. Please email responses back to communications@nwtac.com.

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?

- The Community Size & Population Formula, as opposed to the Needs-Based Formula proposed in 2015, prioritizes quantity over quality. Communities that are the most at-risk in terms of the health detriments of poor community services are not getting the support they need with the current funding formula.
- One of my areas of focus is health services, especially mental health and addictions. Right now, community governments without the sufficient resources required to address the social issues that result from poor mental health are shifting that responsibility to residents. Individuals and non-profits in Inuvik work diligently to provide mental health resources and services, but they themselves are also struggling with support. As a result, we have, in Inuvik, high rates of volunteer burn-out, inconsistent program delivery, and ultimately large gaps in service that can put residents at further risk.

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?

- First, I want to work with communities and community governments to update the funding and program needs identified during the previous evaluation, and develop preliminary estimates for the most immediate needs. Then, identify existing and potential sources of revenue, such as the recommended Gas Tax.

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?

- My work in front-line Nursing and then with the Income Security Program has informed my strong position on mental health and homelessness, and I am prioritizing solutions that can provide for those in need at the local level. For example, I want to see a combined effort to tackle addiction and mental illness in Inuvik. We have a desperate

need for a Dual Diagnosis treatment facility, which would provide family programs, culturally-relevant aftercare, and on-going support for a large number of people suffering.

- I also believe there must be more collaboration between Departments to support those living with disabilities, mental illness and homelessness. I will work to secure local assisted living options that offer individual units and 24/7 support on-site. Immediately expanding the Integrated Case Management Program into all Regional Centres will help to streamline the point of entry to receive services and avoid crisis situations for clients.

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?

- A healthy environment is key to a healthy community, and I believe there must be a collaborative approach to finding adaptation and mitigation solutions to the climate change crisis we are facing. GNWT Departments, Indigenous governments, and community governments really need to be making decisions with the health and wellness of the land and of the people at the forefront. People need access to the land, to traditional foods and medicines, in order to benefit from our culture and heal from the traumas that have caused so many issues. Climate change is connected to all aspects of our wellbeing, and should be heavily weighed when making decisions.
- One of the biggest impacts of climate change felt by communities is failing infrastructure. Inuvik is currently experiencing a huge shortage of public housing availability and part of that is due to difficulties with maintaining units that have been damaged by the thawing ground. People are desperate for suitable living spaces, and sustainable and innovative housing designs and building practices are what will make those spaces a reality. It is important to look at examples such as [Iqaluit's Sustainable Subdivision](#) for guidance, and to support and encourage further research into new ways of building our communities.

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 believe we need to create a culture of excellence -- students who are excelling and students who are really struggling are more identified and supported in the current education system. That leaves a large number of youth who are “doing okay” without the resources they need to reach their potential and excel. A full review of the Education Act, and a critical look at how we can encourage a more holistic and collaborative approach to learning, will be especially important.
- Offering alternative programs for those with different interests, skills, and abilities is a

key to making sure that everyone has a positive educational experience, and I support initiatives like ECE's Skills4Success. Education environments are also affected by, and can affect the mental health of students. Implementing local support workers for student and family needs will go a long way in addressing intergenerational trauma, addictions, and learning difficulties which affect a student's experience and success in school.

- For post-secondary, I would like to see a review of the Student Financial Assistance program to ensure that the funds available and distributed are adequate based on the actual costs and needs of students. I also want to ensure that each Aurora College campus has programming that meets the needs of the people and guides students to fill positions that are in-demand in their local communities. Offerings like the trades programs, certificate/diploma programs, and access to degree programs are vital to student success and access to long-term employment opportunities.

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?

- The GNWT has stated that cannabis tax revenue will be used for cannabis education and health programs. In my view, communities need to be part of the conversation about what these programs will look like. Territory-wide initiatives must be applied and evaluated at the community level to ensure they are effective at incorporating the differences between the needs of the communities. I hope to see this approach if the GNWT moves forward with that plan for the excise tax revenues.