

Shane Thompson for Nahendeh MLA

September 13, 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?

The funding formula needs to be addressed and look at. I believe the department and NWTAC need to get to the table and come up with a plan moving forward.

In the past four years, I have been asking the hard questions, attending committee meetings of Standing Committee of Government Operations (SDOGO - Even through I am not one of the committee members) and advocating for an increase. Including in this last years Infrastructure budget. I know the government has given a small amount of funding to start addressing the issue but it is not good enough.

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?

1) Continue to Advocate for the increase

2) Encourage and support SCOGO to make this issue as one of their priorities in the 19th Assembly

3) Work with the NWTAC and advocate for the communities priorities

Yes.

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?

These are huge issues. I know the the Standing Committee of Social Development has been trying to work on these three issues for the past four years. We have seen some small steps - such as transitional housing projects in four of the communities, increase funding and funding for mental health positions / services and we did do a tour of the addiction facilities the GNWT use for our residents.

Unfortunately, these are only small steps and we need to continue to build on the small progress we have achieve to date.

In regards to addictions - it is very much about after care. We need to improve on this to help the residents who have gone out for treatment.

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 would like to see the GNWT develop more green projects, such as geothermal, LNG, solar and other creative ways to reduce the demand on diesel. It is essentially about working with the communities to come up with a plan that meets their needs as well as using modern technology to enhance existing systems we currently have in place. We have a perfect example in the community of Fort Providence where SSI Energy has developed a system using modern technology to reduce the use of diesel fuel and utilize the waste heat for their business.

Making homes more energy efficient which includes increased funding to the Arctic Energy Alliance. The 18th Assembly has increased their budget to enhance the work they are currently doing. I look at the success they have had in the small community of Jean Marie River, where they helped the Band and homeowners become more energy efficient.

It is about working with the communities to help them develop a plan to address this issue and then work to have a budget in place to make it work.

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 have asked and got a commitment from the present Minister of ECE to do a review on the funding formula used by the Department. It is not fair to the smaller regions and needs to be attended.

As for Auditor General Review, we would need to narrow it down to specific areas. I do not think they could do a review on the whole system in a timely manner. There are a number of areas to look at: Graduation rates, policies in place and how effective they are, early childhood and how funding is allocated to name a few.

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 challenge is the revenue earmark from the cannabis sales has not come close to what they budget. It is right now a very small amount of money. It does not make sense presently to allocated 25% presently. Once the revenue has increased, I believe we should.