

Questions for Federal Candidates
2019 Election

On behalf of the NWT Association of Communities, please accept these questions for Federal Candidates about issues important to communities in the Northwest Territories. We would greatly appreciate your responses by October 11, 2019. Please email your answers to info@nwtac.com.

We intend to post the responses to the following questions on our webpage and follow up with the elected Member in the future.

1. In the last budget, the government doubled the gas tax funding for one time, and it was well received. Do you support the permanent doubling of the gas tax fund for 211 communities in Canada?

New Democrats believe that providing reliable public infrastructure funding is needed to create communities that can afford to build the infrastructure they need to thrive - from roads and bridges to community centres and child care centres and everything in between. These investments will create good jobs in every part of the country. To get there, we will partner with provinces, territories, First Nations and municipalities to deliver reliable public infrastructure funding. It is important to have predictable funding so that communities can plan infrastructure renewal in the long term and not just one year at a time.

2. Climate change and weather-related emergencies are on the rise in recent years. How will you work with our local governments to increase resiliency to extreme weather events and the effects of climate change?

As the impacts of climate change are felt, New Democrats believe that all levels of government will have to step up to help communities cope with the impacts of extreme weather and its consequences. We will expand federal funding to respond to disasters and support communities in proactively adapting their infrastructure to withstand floods, forest fires, and other extreme weather events. We will partner with Canadians and communities to make serious investments in making buildings more energy efficient to help families and communities save money and fight climate change.

3. The design of a program to support climate change in the north must be done in consultation with Northerners to be ensure it has uptake and be effective. Will you ensure that any program that is developed on climate change will be in consultation with Northerners?

For too many years, programs and services we receive in the North have been based on a "one-size-fits-all" methodology, leaving Northerners struggling to make programs and services work for us and often losing time in the implementation of needed initiatives. As your representative for the Northwest Territories, I will work proactively to ensure that programs and services that come to the North are implemented in consultation with Northern people, indigenous governments, municipalities and our territorial government to ensure that

the ideas and concerns of Northerners are taken into account in the design of climate change actions.

3. Homelessness, mental health and addictions are serious issues in the North. How will your party work to ensure these issues get addressed and solutions developed?

New Democrats believe that in a country as wealthy as Canada, we need to work to end homelessness within the next 10 years. Our strategy will address this problem on several levels - working to support people who are at risk of becoming homeless, adopting the "housing first" approach for the homeless and also working with developers to ensure that the stock of quality affordable and social housing is increased by at least 500,000 units over the next 10 years with half done in the next five. This will be achieved by working with provinces and municipalities to build capacity for social, community and affordable housing providers and co-ops and working to meet environmental energy efficiency goals.

This will create thousands of new jobs and will begin with a federal investment of \$5 billion in additional funding in the first year and a half of a New Democratic government. In order to kickstart the construction of co-ops, social and non-profit housing, we will set up dedicated fast-start funds to streamline the application process and help communities get expertise and assistance they need to get projects off the ground right away - not years from now.

A New Democratic government will also spur construction of affordable homes by waiving the federal portion of the GST/HST on the construction of new affordable rental units - to get new units built faster and keep them affordable for the longer term.

A New Democratic government will also provide immediate relief to families that are struggling to afford rent in otherwise suitable housing while we bring forward long term solutions to the housing affordability crisis.

Mental health coverage should be available at no cost to Canadians, as a part of their standard health care coverage. New Democrats would work to ensure that becomes a reality across the country.

In addition, we will make sure that people can get the treatment they need in their community through investments in Indigenous health care infrastructure and will work in partnership with Indigenous communities to improve access to mental health and addiction treatment services.

New Democrats believe there is much more we can do to save lives and support those struggling with addictions. To deal with the opioid crisis, we would declare a public health emergency and work with all levels of government, experts and Canadians to end the criminalization and stigma of drug addiction so that people struggling can get the help they need without fear of arrest. We will support overdose prevention sites and expand access to treatment on demand for people struggling with addiction.

4. Inadequate housing in terms of both quantity and quality is greatly affecting outcomes for our residents, whether it is in education, health, justice and many other areas. Will your party ensure that long term funding is made a priority, and will you work to find a flexible

program that works for our Northern region?

I agree that adequate housing is essential and has been underfunded to the detriment of our communities who now suffer with old and poorly maintained housing stock that creates pressure on communities across the North, creating overcrowding and a population of unrecognized homeless people who are forced to stay with relatives rather than have their own home to live in.

New Democrats would like to see an end to homelessness within the next 10 years. Our strategy will address this problem on several levels - working to support people who are at risk of becoming homeless, adopting the "housing first" approach for the homeless and also working with developers to ensure that the stock of quality affordable and social housing is increased by at least 500,000 units across Canada over the next 10 years with half done in the next five. This will be achieved by working with provinces and municipalities to build capacity for social, community and affordable housing providers and co-ops and working to meet environmental energy efficiency goals.

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6. It is essential that all communities have access to all telecommunications so they can participate in the digital economy as well as all aspects of digital life. How do you intend to advocate for this essential service to all NWT homes and improve service and reliability for all?

The digital climate of today's business world demands reliable, high speed internet and cell phone connectivity. Ensuring access in every community now and not 10 years from now as in the Liberal government's plan is a priority for New Democrats. This technology needs to be considered in the same light as other utilities - as telephone connections were in the past, cell phones and internet have become a necessity for everyone. We intend to see that Canadians have access to basic cell phone and reliable internet service with a price cap to make sure Canadians aren't paying more than the global average for these services. In addition, we will make sure that providers offer a basic plan for wireless and broadband that is comparable with other affordable plans available in other countries. To put an end to surprise bills, we require companies to offer unlimited wireless data options at affordable rates as exist elsewhere in the world and abolish data caps for broadband internet.

7. More work needs to be done to ensure cellular coverage along current and future NWT

highways. It is a necessity for safety in the North. How will your government support the NWT in this safety requirement?

At the present, time cell services is not available on the full length of the highway system in the Northwest Territories (or on the Dempster and Klondike highways in the Yukon which the Beaufort Delta uses to access their region). As a result, people who are frequent travellers often invest in satellite communications technology to stay in contact with their families and friends when travelling or go completely without communications when they travel. At the present time, the Liberal government has a 10 year plan to provide cell service to all rural and remote communities, but no specific plans for providing cellular coverage along the highways of the country, and at the present time, many gaps exist with little or no cell service. In the North, these gaps are much more significant, and due to the smaller amount of traffic on the roads, there can be a significant lag between when an accident occurs and when authorities are notified. New Democrats would work with communities and the Territorial government to create a strategy for filling this gap so that our roads become safer.