

Dear Candidates,

Thank you for putting your name forward in the upcoming Territorial Election. The City values our partnership with the Government of the Northwest Territories, and we believe that when we work together, we can accomplish more.

As a City, we believe the following issues are important and we would like to hear from candidates on how they would work to address them in their term:

1. Community Government Underfunding
2. Transfer of Commissioner's Land to Community Governments
3. Social Support
4. Economic Development

These issues are all directly related to City Council's recently approved 2019-2022 Strategic Goals and Objectives; we encourage you to review them here: <https://www.yellowknife.ca/en/city-government/council-goals-and-objectives.asp>

We are asking all Yellowknife candidates to answer the questions below. Once received, answers will be posted on the City's website by the next working day. We will be notifying residents of the webpage via social media and other communication channels, and we will be encouraging them to read the answers before Election Day.

Once again, thank you for putting your name forward and we look forward to working with the successful candidates during the 19th Assembly.

Sincerely,

Yellowknife City Council

1.

Community Government Underfunding

Background:

In 2014, the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) and the Northwest Territories Association of Communities (NWTAC) completed a review of community funding policies with the participation of a stakeholders group of community leaders and administrators representing a cross-section of Northwest Territories (NWT) communities. The Funding review process was completed in a transparent, inclusive and comprehensive manner.

As the Minister of MACA noted in his Minister's statement on February 27, 2019: *"It started us on the path towards more accurate and detailed information for both the department and community governments, and a clear and defensible approach to calculating community government funding needs. The review also identified a large difference between current funding levels and full needs-based funding."*

The review found that communities in the NWT were underfunded by \$40 million annually. Since the review, there have been small increases but no implementation plan to close the underfunding gap. This shortfall makes it difficult for communities to effectively deliver essential services, maintain infrastructure and assets, and be resilient for future challenges. In addition, as the Conference Board of Canada's 2015 report (*Economic Impacts of Community Spending on the Territorial Economy*) calculated, by closing the community funding gap, 220 additional permanent jobs across the Northwest Territories would be created.

Question: What is your position on the current funding formula for community governments? What steps will you take to ensure that communities are funded fairly?

Response: I am aware of the municipal funding gap review and I strongly advocated for a plan to close it during the 18th Assembly. For example, see questions I raised in the review of the 2019-20 GNWT Budget: <https://kevinoreillyframelake.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2019-02-27-COW-MACA-Municipal-Funding-Gap.pdf> Such a plan was never tabled, despite promises to do so. I strongly support the recommendations of the review where no communities would lose funding, and future funding is related to infrastructure and operational needs. I support an incremental annual increase in the total municipal funding transfer in the coming Assembly, with the shortfall being closed by the end of the term. After that, I support allocations that allow municipalities to keep up with inflation and their operational and infrastructure needs.

2.

Transfer of Commissioner's Land to Community Governments

Background:

City Council recently established Goals and Objectives for 2019-2022 and specifically prioritized strategic land development and increased growth of development opportunities. Specifically, the City will focus on diversity of development options and promotion of development across the City. It is difficult for the City to achieve these objectives without fee simple tenure to public lands within municipal boundaries. Under the current regime, the City must apply to the GNWT for public lands within the municipal boundary and is often not granted the lands as requested.

The City of Yellowknife is home to close to half the population of the NWT, but has tenure to a very small portion of the land that is used to provide services for residents, businesses, industry, and visitors. While the City of Yellowknife is responsible for administering by-laws within the municipal boundary, the City only has ownership of approximately 9% of the land within the municipal boundary: 1% of land within the municipal boundary is vacant and available for development. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the City to be able to responsibly plan for and invest in future community development without fee simple title to lands within our boundary.

In addition, developers want certainty, consistency and reasonable timeframes to proceed with development and business opportunity initiatives. When most of the land within the municipal boundary requires a land application, consultation, survey and then transfer, the City is not in a position to facilitate timely development and therefore economic development is hindered.

Question: What steps will you take to ensure that communities have tenure to all public lands within their boundaries to meet community development needs?

Response: As a former City Councillor (1997-2006) I am well aware of the land availability issue. As an MLA, I sat on the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment which reviewed Bill 46 Public Land Act. I made sure that there is substantive coverage of the land availability issue in the Committee's report on the Bill (see pages 12-16 of the report at https://www.assembly.gov.nt.ca/sites/default/files/19-08-19_cr_31-183_report_on_the_review_of_bills_46_-_public_land_act_-_final.pdf).

I recognize that there is a need to consult and work with Indigenous governments regarding the transfer of Crown lands before final agreements are reached. The recent collaboration with the Yellowknives Dene First Nation on City boundary revisions is a good example of how partnerships and cooperation can work.

The GNWT will continue to have major land requirements within City boundaries for its administrative and service functions. The upcoming creation of a NWT Polytechnic University with student residences is an excellent example or expansion of the Yellowknife airport runways for greater access to Asian tourism markets. Some GNWT-owned lands will need to be retained to meet long term needs but can be achieved through collaborative planning.

I will continue to work on making more Crown lands available to the City in the 19th Assembly through appropriate policies, timelines for responding to requests and reasons for decision.

Background:

The impacts of homelessness, addictions and mental health have always been present in Yellowknife, but recently, the impacts have become increasingly visible within the community. While significant work has been done to address homelessness, addictions and mental health issues in Yellowknife, individuals and families continue to struggle with these complex and often intertwined problems:

- There were 338 people counted as experiencing homelessness during the 2018 Yellowknife Point-inTime (PiT) Homeless Count. Only 16% reported being from Yellowknife; about a third (36%) of survey participants had arrived in the past 5 years. The top reasons people reported for migrating is connecting with families and employment.
- As identified in the GNWT's Mental Health and Addictions Strategic Framework, alcohol and drug use is very costly to our system. Between 2008/09 and 2010/11, on an annual average basis, 429 NWT patients were hospitalized 615 times with one or more alcohol or drug related issue, resulting in 3,250 bed days at an estimated cost of \$7.5 million to the territorial health system.

City Council recently established Goals and Objectives for 2019-2022, and specifically prioritized working with partners to address pressing social issues. In particular, our Objective 3.3 identifies:

- Work with partners to address public disturbances.
- Focus on bringing partners and funding to support the implementation of the City's 10-year plan to end homelessness.

Question: What actions and programs established so far do you think are working, and what needs to be done differently to address these issues of homelessness, addictions and mental health? How would you prioritize or sequence the actions you feel are needed, and how would you balance these with other GNWT priorities? How will you support the City's 10-year plan to end homelessness?

Response: The safe ride program is working well in terms of meeting peoples need and diverting people away from the RCMP and Stanton Territorial Hospital. It does require continued GNWT support.

The Day Shelter and Sobering Centre provide a vital service both to the homeless and the community as a whole. It is not the solution to the problem, but an effort to reduce harm and impacts. The security issues around the facility

should have been anticipated and dealt with before its opening. A good neighbor agreement where the roles and responsibilities are laid out, frequency of patrols, hours of services, complaint procedures and dispute resolution can be agreed upon will be an important step towards better relationships.

Housing First programming has been successful not only in providing housing, but developing the residential skills needed to successfully maintain housing. The last Cabinet failed to improve access to housing. We must end the policy of no increases to the number of public housing units and better support the City's 10-year plan by devoting a fairer share of capital dollars to human needs. Housing needs to be a higher priority for the next Assembly.

Residential addiction treatment will continue to be available through southern institutions but follow-up and after-care programs in the NWT can and should be improved. On-the-land treatment like the Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation's have proven to be very helpful and are worthy of further GNWT support.

The next step is the introduction of a managed alcohol program. These have proven successful in many other places including Thunder Bay. Such a program has the potential to reduce unsafe activities associated with getting money for the next drink, reduce binge consumption and stabilize people for healing and treatment. A trial or pilot project should be run and carefully evaluated with support from GNWT.

Background:

Diversity is the key to a strong, sustainable and resilient economy. The sustainability and growth of the NWT economy requires strategic investment and diversification.

Mining and exploration has been a core part of our economy but diamond production has reached its peak and will decline in the next decade. In the Conference Board of Canada's annual economic forecast (Summer 2019), economic growth in the NWT will be modest in the near term, hovering in the 2% range, but will subsequently ease sharply over the long term due primarily to weaker investment in the mining sector.

Earlier this year, Council identified growing and diversifying our local economy as one of the four goals that we'd like to achieve during our time in office. Actions to be taken to fulfill this goal include implementing a governance structure for a destination marketing organization that will maximize the economic benefits of tourism; working with partners to maximize the community and economic development benefits from an expanded post-secondary presence in Yellowknife; and updating the City's economic development strategy.

Question: What is your overall vision for economic development in the NWT, and how does community economic development in Yellowknife fit with that? What will you do if elected to ensure that a stand-alone university campus is built in Yellowknife and the university is funded adequately to be successful? Cost and reliability of electricity is a major concern for businesses and residents; how would you work to address that?

Response: In my first term, I was the Assembly's most vocal advocate for greater emphasis on economic diversification and community-based economies. I will pursue this balanced approach in my second term. The last Cabinet vigorously pursued mining investment. The barriers to mining are largely based on commodity prices and financing that are outside of our control. We can and need to market the NWT as a great place to live, work and do business. Our NWT environmental and resource management regime is different by design and the result of constitutionally entrenched land rights agreements. There is a lot of guidance and assistance for our system which creates certainty. This can be enhanced with completion of the land rights agreements for the Akaitcho and Dehcho regions which must be a priority for the next Assembly.

Tourism growth is a fabulous success story for Yellowknife that must be maintained and expanded. GNWT needs to better protect our brand and experience with tougher licensing and enforcement in partnership with the City. We need a new visitors centre with

adequate GNWT support that is coordinated with the City's destination marketing local operators and the retail sector.

I have always supported the concept of a post-secondary institution for the NWT, with a campus in Yellowknife. This was part of my platform in 2015. Our campus will be part of a strong network across the NWT that includes the existing campuses in Inuvik and Fort Smith and the community learning centres. The next Assembly and Cabinet need to keep a NWT Polytechnic University at the top of its infrastructure needs when seeking support from the federal government for transformative investment in the NWT.

The NWT Power Corporation needs to be reoriented towards building community and household energy self-sufficiency. Big grids and big projects are the old way of thinking. The world is moving in the opposite direction with greater investment in renewables and energy storage. I support the use of small hydro for communities such as Whati, Gameti, Wekweti and Lutsel K'e that have good potential. Getting these communities off diesel can be accomplished efficiently and effectively, and will reduce power bills for everyone. Large hydro project such as Taltson expansion are full of uncertainty as there is no money to build it, no buyers for the power have been identified, and large projects elsewhere have proven to be very controversial (e.g., Muskrat Falls, Site C and more). However, existing Taltson power should certainly be used for regional development in the South Slave. Arctic Energy Alliance energy retrofit programs can be expanded and improved. These efforts can be coordinated with the City's new authority to establish an energy revolving fund where the savings from reduced power costs are used to fund retrofits of homes and businesses.