

Canadian Paediatric Society Questionnaire

Response from Kevin O'Reilly, Candidate for MLA Frame Lake

1. Strengthening child and youth mental health and mental health care

If elected, what will you do to improve access to publicly funded mental health treatment and resources for children and youth?

There is no child or youth psychiatric unit currently in the new Stanton hospital, despite all of the additional beds provided in the new psychiatric ward. There is a child psychiatrist but no trained nurses. No beds are presently allotted to accommodate admissions for pediatric psychiatry. As a result, children have to be admitted in the psych unit or in some other unit in the hospital. It is difficult to admit patients in the pediatric unit because it has been downsized so there is little room. An alternative has been to send them to Edmonton but the same problem arises in that there are limited beds or facilities for them there. Also, doing this causes medical travel expenses to go up and, in addition, the children are separated from their family support. The system may save more money by providing necessary care locally which would also likely improve outcomes.

At present, there are limited resources available to counsel children or youth, either by public or private counsellors. This means that only limited child counselling services now exist in the Northwest Territories.

There is an urgent need to develop more partnerships with southern institutions and facilities in order to provide appropriate counselling for children and for youth who have specific complicated mental health needs.

More public resources need to be devoted to helping youth develop their own personal skills for self-care.

More resources need to be provided for information campaigns for kids about the kinds of public and private programs and resources that are available to assist them in addressing their problems.

2. Expanding access to paediatric care

If elected, what will you do to increase access to paediatric-trained developmental support services such as speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and audiologists in rural and remote locations in NWT?

During my first term, I raised the issue of wait times for essential medical services such as speech therapy and pushed for improved public reporting of wait times. All paediatric-trained developmental support services provide local and regional services but on a limited basis. Additional public funds need to be provided to ensure the provision of developmental support services to rural and remote communities that currently don't receive them or that are inadequately resourced.

A comprehensive survey needs to be undertaken of remote communities' needs for developmental support services and of community perceptions of the adequacy of available services. It needs to focus in particular on the availability of these specialized support services to meet remote community needs. The results of such a survey would then be used to plan and budget the necessary resources to serve these needs.

3. Creating safe and healthy environments

If elected, what will you do to ensure safer homes, schools and communities for children and youth, including by reducing rates of childhood poverty and addressing threats associated with addictive substances and firearms?

Funded maternal and paternal leave plays a part in allowing young parents to bond with their children. I strongly supported the improvements made in the NWT *Employment Standards Act* that coordinate territorial benefits with recently made federal changes to parental benefits. Another solution is to fund universal childcare to provide quality care for pre-school children and allow parents to be able to work when childcare costs are affordable. I supported universal childcare in my first term and look forward to raising the issue again.

Increasing employment opportunities for family members as well as providing access to affordable housing or social housing would help to reduce child poverty. More accessible information must be provided to families about employment and housing opportunities potentially available to them.

One way to increase safety for youth is to work with the education authorities to ensure that students are better informed students about the dangers of using alcohol, tobacco and opioids. The “Don’t be a Butthead” program was particularly successful in promoting healthy living with regard to tobacco and should be revived.

Efforts must also be made to impress upon parents the need to keep firearms safely stored and not accessible to children and youth.

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