

French Media Candidates Questionnaire

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

Question 1: Which industry should replace the diamond industry and how?
Quelle industrie devrait remplacer l'industrie du diamant et de quelle manière?

Response:

We need to diversify the economy by investing in different sectors such as tourism, renewable energy, the NWT Polytechnic University, and arts and culture. It is a problem to think that just one industry will save the economy of the NWT. We can better weather ups and downs in each sector by diversifying. For tourism, we need a new visitor centre in partnership with the City's efforts at destination marketing to better support local operators and maintain our brand and reputation. For renewable energy, we need wood heating, small hydro, wind and solar to help communities become more self-reliant and reduce the cost of living. The NWT Polytechnic University will bring research and development that we can focus on issues important to us and the circumpolar world. We have a wealth of talented artists and we need to help market their creations and create more jobs in this growing sector.

Question 2: The GNWT and the Commission scolaire francophone des Territoires du Nord-Ouest, don't agree on who should be allowed into the territories two French-first language schools. This disagreement has brought them in front of the courts more than once. Who should decide who can attend a French first language school and why?

Response:

CSFTNO is best placed to know the needs and ability of their students and schools in meeting their educational needs. Assimilation remains quite high and is in fact the biggest threat to the loss of the French language in the NWT. Many rights-holder children have not mastered the language but this can and does happen. CSFTNO is also best placed to decide which non-right holders should be admitted through its own strict criteria. The Yukon has a much more open process that allows their French school board more authority with appropriate reporting. The resources devoted to resolving French first language rights in the courts would be better directed at revising the Ministerial Directives on French first language education in a more collaborative fashion.

Question 3: In the context of a post-devolution territorial government, which former federal legislation do you think should be immediately updated to reflect a made-in-the-north policy approach?

Dans la mise en place d'un gouvernement territorial post-dévolotion, quelle législation héritée du fédéral devrait être immédiatement mise à jour pour lui conférer un aspect nordique?

Response:

Changes were made to some of the post-devolution mirror legislation including that dealing with oil and gas, mineral rights, public lands, and some related matters under GNWT jurisdiction such as protected areas and environmental rights. The remaining areas for further legislative work include waters, forestry, air quality, environmental protection and heritage resources. The most important of these is likely water. Some work was started in the last Assembly where GNWT worked with Indigenous governments and co-management boards on the Waters Act. Adequate resources need to be provided with meaningful timelines for a more collaborative approach to co-drafting of amended water legislation. Involvement of all Indigenous governments and relevant co-management boards will be essential. The general public and other interested stakeholder should also have the ability to make submissions. Improved communications with regular MLAs will also ensure a more productive review of legislation when it is publicly reviewed.

Question 4: How should the GNWT be involved in resolving outstanding Indigenous land claims?

Quelle implication, le GTNO devrait-il entreprendre pour conclure les ententes de revendications territoriales autochtones en litige?

Response:

During the 18th Assembly, Cabinet made cuts to the staffing and resources available for negotiations which I pointed out and opposed. I regularly questioned the lack of progress on the negotiations.

In the next Assembly, there needs to be a fresh and more flexible approach to negotiations with sufficient resources to ensure completion of all outstanding agreements. The recently released "Recognition and Reconciliation of Rights Policy for treaty negotiations in British Columbia" (<https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1567636002269/1567636037453>) is a good approach that might help serve as a model for a new NWT approach. The GNWT has to make substantial revisions to its negotiating mandates to acknowledge the inherent right of self-government, Aboriginal title, and significant quanta of lands for Indigenous ownership and control. Canada has to make similar changes. Adequate resources must also be allocated as part of the budget with clear reporting of progress, and measures to ensure success.

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