

Municipal Questions for Candidates Running in the 2019 Territorial Election

Question #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? What is your position on an indexed funding formula for community governments?

Answers:

BOOT LAKE

KALINEK, JIMMY

LOREEN, DESMOND

If our communities are underfunded, as MLA for Inuvik Boot Lake I will do everything in my power to make sure Inuvik and by that effect, the rest of the communities who need funding will get it. I will work with the other MLAs, ministers and departments to ensure each community gets a piece of the funding pie, and keep pressuring to get a implementation plan in place and acted on as soon as we can. Without action, a plan is nothing.

REES, EUGENE

Given that the issue has already been reviewed, I would commit to evaluating the results and working to create a funding formula that would help to close the gap between what is currently being received and what the Town needs in order to maintain its level of service.

THOM, DIANE

Considering some of the issues that the north is facing (climate change, increasing cost of living, decreasing property and – or Gas Tax) there is a need for greater investment from the federal and territorial governments to ensure that basic services are being maintained or improved upon. The last major adjustment for tax-based municipalities – A New Deal was reviewed and adjustments proposed that would close the funding gap using a fair and equitable formula for basic municipal services. WE should also continue to seek funding for some major infrastructure project funding or new revenue sources to address some of the funding issues that we will be facing in the future, such as climate change and cost of living and energy costs.

TWIN LAKES

HENDRICK, DONALD

I would be in favour to make sure that all communities are funded more. I will push the 19th Legislative to fund all our community governments fairly.

ROSS, SALLY

SEMMLER, LESA

Background:

Within the Town of Inuvik, most of the lands remain as Commissioners land although most of it has not been surveyed and legal description given at land titles. In addition, many of the right of ways for the roads and water utility remain as Commissioners property even though the Town has responsibility for this.

Many municipalities face this same situation and the challenge is should the Town wish to develop an area designated Commissioners land. It adds another step to the Town in having to develop a land acquisition by-law each time. The GNWT as we understand it cannot sell commissioners land directly to anyone but the municipality for lands within the municipal boundary.

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

Answers:

BOOT LAKE

KALINEK, JIMMY

LOREEN, DESMOND

I want to eliminate any barricades in the way of community development. Let's pull away the red tape and get those lands in the control of the municipalities to use, since they are already as stated in the letter, on the hook for already.

REES, EUGENE

It certainly appears as though the current land ownership within the TOI is detrimental to future growth within the Town and I will commit to working with the Town to address this inequity.

THOM, DIANE

Inuvik should not have a land acquisition freeze on Commissioner's Land and requirements such as by-laws. We should use our territorial association to change the legislation that could release these lands to the Town of Inuvik. This should be done now before the MLAs establish their mandate for the next Legislative Assembly. We should also seek the support of the local and regional Indigenous governments for these changes. Devolution over land and resources has given the GNWT – Legislation Assembly the ability to draft legislation that is "made in the North" we should use this tool to establish a greater ability of communities to make their own decisions.

TWIN LAKES

HENDRICK, DONALD

This situation I think the government must transfer all crown land that is within the community boundary, as stated the Town has the responsibility, so I will lobby to get that change for the Town.

ROSS, SALLY

SEMMLER, LESA

Background:

The impacts of homelessness, addictions and mental health have always been present in Inuvik, but recently, the impacts have become increasingly visible within the community. Families and individuals face many challenges related to homelessness, addictions and mental health issues in Inuvik, individuals and families continue to struggle with these complex and often intertwined problems:

- 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.

QUESTION: What actions would you drive the GNWT to take? How would you work to address these issues?

Answers:**BOOT LAKE**

KALINEK, JIMMY

LOREEN, DESMOND

I have made it clear that I will fight to get local treatment centres and increased programs here in Inuvik for the region, as I do not believe in sending people out for help. We need to increase the funding pots for these resources, to make staff stay longer, to train locally, and to have the best care available in Inuvik.

REES, EUGENE

I would partner with the TOI and the Inuvik Interagency Committee to find or create facilities in Inuvik to serve the Region in a manner comparable to Yellowknife.

THOM, DIANE

Social Support – I don't believe that the problem is just about alcohol or drugs, it is about some of the root problems and the inability to address trauma from residential schools, a poor economy and lack of jobs, not enough social housing, etc. This is an important area for the Town of Inuvik, initiatives such as the Children First Society building and services, homeless and other shelters, improvements in Child Welfare and Education – K to 12 and establishing mental health and addiction counselling. These are important issues and the Town's support is needed to lobby government to provide programs that will improve the social, cultural and economic conditions. Working with GTC and IRC to make progress to decrease the disparities between our residents and indigenous peoples and the rest of the Canada. We should try to have a united approach to social problems and issues and develop our own programs and services that address past issues so families and children can look toward the future.

TWIN LAKES

HENDRICK, DONALD

The government must take action on these Social issues ASAP, they have to make sure all resources are available to deal with all these issues and provide funding to our local communities and aboriginal groups to help all communities and the people of NWT.

ROSS, SALLY

SEMMLER, LESA

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.

For the Beaufort Delta Oil & Gas exploration has come to a virtual halt with no vision of resumption in the future. This area does not have the potential for mining exploration or production that the other area of the Territory may have.

This lack of development of resources has put the Town of Inuvik in a position of high cost of fuels along with the lack of a secure source of energy which could have a profound effect on the Community going forward.

QUESTION: What is your overall vision for economic development? Securing a long-term energy source for the Town is in the Town's opinion a high priority; how would you work to address that?

Answers:**BOOT LAKE**

KALINEK, JIMMY

LOREEN, DESMOND

I want to see more solar power allowances in the NWT for a start. If someone in Inuvik wants to go solar, I don't want there to be any deterrent in place for that. Let's harness the available energy we have already. I'd also like to see more exploration of the Beaufort delta onshore region for oil and gas, as the Inuvik Tuk highway has led to greater access than ever before. There are always going to be people who will always call Inuvik home and we need to make this the best community we can for everyone.

REES, EUGENE

The NWT Government must work with the Federal Government to encourage oil and gas exploration to continue both onshore and offshore in the Territories. The NWT Government also needs to create a significantly improved environment that encourages mineral prospecting and exploration.

THOM, DIANE

Our economy has never been in such a sorry state. Tourism in the long term may help and major infrastructure development to address our future needs and climate change impacts. Again we might want to look toward the federal government who recognizes a need to address these impacts, this will also improve on the number of residents who have the skills in trades. We should also lobby for major restructuring of government (decentralize – services), either through the new GNWT – Legislative Assembly or Self-government agreements – which potentially will result in new funding that can also improve services.

As well, we should be making a concerted effort to encourage resource development. The Prime Minister established a freeze on oil and gas exploration and development, we should make it clear that freeze should be lifted and support all efforts to carry out that activity so there is no major oil spill that may ruin our environment. As well we should lobby for further investments from the Arctic and Northern Framework recently announced.

TWIN LAKES

HENDRICK, DONALD

Completion of the Mackenzie Valley Highway will benefit Inuvik with a year round highway that will not have to close in the Fall and Spring, that will lower the cost living. With the Dempster Highway closed so often that is also costing us money.

The Territorial government must help out Inuvik on our Natural Gas situation as hauling in propane and LNG is also keeping our cost of living up.

ROSS, SALLY

SEMMLER, LESA

Background:

As part of the development of the new school the GNWT agreed, in writing, to replace the two ball diamonds and the soccer field that were lost with the new school. This agreement stated the Government would replace the fields and there was no dollar maximum mentioned.

Since then the Government has responded to the Town's request to complete that restoration and have received a response that they would only fund the replacement to a value of \$450,000 which is only \$50,000 more than the original estimate they say was calculated in 2007. The Town has done considerable research in developing a much more current estimate of costs and they are substantially higher than what the GNWT is offering.

QUESTION: If you were elected MLA what would your stance be on having the GNWT live up to the agreement made in 2007 regarding this issue.

Answers:

BOOT LAKE

KALINEK, JIMMY

LOREEN, DESMOND

I want to see the development of those fields and will make sure the GNWT makes good on those agreements as soon as elected.

REES, EUGENE

Recreation plays a huge role in the everyday lives of the people of Inuvik and I will insist that government lives up to its committee to our residents.

THOM, DIANE

Recreation is a high priority – especially for our youth and we should promote it more and provide funding incentives for our local recreation associations. I would be happy to review with the Town of Inuvik the actual costs and lobby for the extra funding that was promised.

TWIN LAKES

HENDRICK, DONALD

Yes, I will make it my priority to get our fields back and fully funded as Inuvik needs the Soccer Field and softball field, we have waited long enough for this to happen.

ROSS, SALLY

SEMMLER, LESA

Background:

The GNWT has released a paper on the future of Aurora College with the recommendation it be transitioned into a Polytechnic University. With this review there are fears programs will be transferred to Yellowknife and again having Inuvik watch as jobs move away and the with them the economic development and the ability to attract new residents.

QUESTION: How would you envision the campus in Inuvik continuing its long history of delivering programming should the College proceed with its plan to transition to a Polytechnic University?

Answers:**BOOT LAKE**

KALINEK, JIMMY

LOREEN, DESMOND

I am fighting to see Inuvik become the centre for the university, to see Inuvik get those jobs, those students, that uptake in our local economy, and even build some more student housing. Inuvik is the hub for the region and we can carry more weight than Aurora College or the GNWT has presented us.

REES, EUGENE

If Government proceeds with the recommendation to transition Aurora College into a Polytechnic University, I will work to ensure that this will not have a detrimental effect on the ability of the Aurora College Inuvik Campus to serve the educational needs of the people of this Region.

THOM, DIANE

We need to get beyond offering up-grading so students can enter directly into diploma and degree programs. We operate a territorial e-Learning system out of the East 3 School and remote communities such as Ulukhaktok had 3 children who finished grade 12 with the marks and courses to enter directly into Universities. I also completed my master's degree through Royal Roads through a combination of online learning as well as attending University.

Why can't we expand this e-Learning to delivering more courses to our students, so they don't have to take upgrading. We should also encourage and consult with parents and children that there is a great deal of jobs (government, research) and that students can be successful in school if they work hard.

TWIN LAKES

HENDRICK, DONALD

Not all programs do not have to be located in Yellowknife, if they do go ahead with the Polytechnic University, I will ensure that both Inuvik and Fort Smith will continue to educate our children and family's for years to come.

ROSS, SALLY

SEMMLER, LESA

Question #7: Will you commit to regular meetings with Mayor and Council?

Answers:

BOOT LAKE

KALINEK, JIMMY

Yes I will be meeting with Town Council if elected.

LOREEN, DESMOND

Yes I will pledge to keep regular meetings with council and administration when elected.

REES, EUGENE

Most definitely.

THOM, DIANE

Yes, Meaningful change will only come when the community works and partner together.

TWIN LAKES

HENDRICK, DONALD

ROSS, SALLY

SEMMLER, LESA

Question #8: Will you advocate to the federal government for the continued Doubling of the Federal Gas Tax?

Background:

The Federal Gas Tax Fund is a permanent, indexed fund provided directly to municipalities, flowing through provinces and territories to support strategic infrastructure investments. It provides over \$2 billion annually for local priorities.

The Gas Tax Fund transfers funds directly to municipalities of all sizes, empowering them to meet local needs. In the 2019 federal budget, the government doubled the gas tax transfer to municipalities for one year.

QUESTION: Will you advocate to the federal government for the continued doubling of the Federal Gas Tax?

Answers:

BOOT LAKE

KALINEK, JIMMY

We already pay way to much to live in the north and I will be pushing to lower the cost of living in Inuvik and hope that we MLA's can work together to better the living in the North.

LOREEN, DESMOND

Yes I will advocate for the continued and permanent doubling of the Federal Gas tax if it means more direct funds for the community.

REES, EUGENE

I will first speak with Council to gain knowledge on the subject.

THOM, DIANE

TWIN LAKES

HENDRICK, DONALD

ROSS, SALLY

SEMMLER, LESA