

Michael McLeod's responses to Candidates Questions provided by NWTAC – Received via Team McLeod
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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?

- In order to help Canadian communities of all sizes to address their infrastructure needs and to recognize the strain COVID-19 has had on municipal budgets, our government doubled the Canada Community-Building Fund (formerly known as the Gas Tax Fund) transfers for this year. Here in the Northwest Territories, this move has provided our communities with an extra \$16.5 million this year to improve the infrastructure their residents rely on.
- I know how important these transfers are to our local governments, and believe a longer-term enhancement to this fund should be explored by the Government of Canada. I also support working with all levels of government to find ways to make our infrastructure programs more flexible for northern communities, and understand it should be easier to stack federal funds to ensure projects can proceed.

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?

- In the North, we are on the front lines of climate change. As we experience increasing challenges with how climate change impacts our lives, it is critical that the federal government is actively supporting all levels of government to address these issues. Our government introduced the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund (DMAF) in Budget 2017; this fund, which was initially allocated \$2 billion over 10 years, is specifically targeted to helping Canadian communities increase resiliency to the effects of climate change. DMAF has already invested \$64 million into NWT projects in Yellowknife, Inuvik, Hay River, and in the Arctic coastal communities. This fund is working for northern communities, and that is why I am pleased that our 2021 budget provided a \$1.4 billion top-up to the program. Of this new amount, \$670 million would be dedicated to new, small-scale projects between \$1 million and \$20 million in eligible costs. In addition, 10 percent of the total funding envelope would be dedicated to Indigenous recipients to benefit each distinctions-based group. Together, this would support projects that help small, rural, remote, northern, and Indigenous communities adapt to climate change impacts.
- Several of our communities faced significant flooding this year, and we know the risk of similar floods will only increase due to our changing climate. A re-elected Liberal government will complete our work with provinces and territories to develop flood maps for higher-risk areas in the next three years, and will also take action to protect homeowners who are at high risk of flooding and don't have adequate insurance protection, by creating a low-cost national flood insurance program.
- Wildfires have also posed serious threats to NWT communities. Our platform proposes to: train 1,000 new community-based firefighters to ensure we are ready for future fire seasons; work with provinces and territories to provide firefighters with the equipment they need; and support and expand Indigenous-led fire crews and build capacity to better incorporate Indigenous traditional knowledge strategies in fire management

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?

- With the North warming at almost three times the global average rate, it is absolutely vital for Northerners to be actively involved and included in the development of climate policies and programs. I strongly support more northern voices being involved on all policies that affect us, and especially when it comes to our environment.
- For example, our party is committed to achieving a net-zero emitting electricity system by 2035 energy goal. To achieve this, we will need major investments in the North to get off our reliance on diesel, and we will need to ensure those programs and policies to get us to net-zero work for Northerners.

4. 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?

- We know that homelessness is a very serious issue across the NWT, and while it may present differently in Yellowknife than it does in the communities, the root causes are the same.
- Part of that is access to safe and affordable housing. Our government has been working with the GNWT and municipal, Indigenous, and not-for-profit partners to address the housing crisis, and while we have seen progress we know more work is required. Through our Indigenous Community Infrastructure Fund, we have reached funding agreements with Indigenous governments across the territory to assist with their housing and infrastructure needs.
- In our last budget we have also invested an additional \$567 million to extend the elevated level of Reaching Home support over the next two years, which has been used by the City of Yellowknife to support a variety of programming and housing initiatives.
- On the matter of programming, we know that housing units alone will not solve the housing crisis; it will also require greater access to culturally-sensitive programs like mental health and addiction services.
- Our plan includes co-developing and investing in a distinctions-based Mental Health and Wellness Strategy that meets the deep and unique needs of Indigenous peoples to address the ongoing impacts of colonization and residential schools. A co-developed mental health and wellness strategy could also respond to the prevalent opioid crisis, include culturally appropriate wraparound services for addictions and trauma, suicide and life promotion, and the building of treatment centres based on the priorities of communities.
- Our platform also includes \$4.5 billion in mental health transfers to the provinces and territories, and a further \$2 billion for Indigenous governments.

5. 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?

- Our party is fully committed to working with our partners across the NWT to make housing more accessible.

- In addition to some of the housing elements mentioned in the previous question, we also rolled out the Canada- Northwest Territories Housing Benefit. A \$19.2 million component of our National Housing Strategy bilateral agreement with the GNWT, this program will provide recipient households a monthly benefit of between \$200-800 to support their housing costs.
- Our platform also proposes to co-develop an Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy, with an initial allocation of \$300 million. We are also seeking to more than double the National Housing Co-Investment Fund, which has supported the 102-unit Avens Pavilion and other local projects.

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?

- Our party is committed to closing the digital divide for rural, remote, and Northern communities. Through our Universal Broadband Fund, \$2.75 billion will be made available to help us achieve our goal of 98 per cent of the country having high-speed broadband by 2026 and 100 per cent by 2030.. The Universal Broadband Fund has several streams, including a Rapid Response Stream that supported the \$11 million fibre line to Whatì.
- We are also planning to require those that have purchased the rights to build broadband actually do so. With this "use it or lose it" approach, Canada's large national carriers will be required to accelerate the roll-out of wireless and high-speed internet in rural and northern Canada by progressively meeting broadband access milestones between now and 2025. If these milestones are not met, we will mandate the resale of spectrum rights and reallocate that capacity to smaller, regional providers.

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?

- I support the federal government working with the GNWT and communities to help make our highways safer through greater cellular coverage. As a component of our Universal Broadband Fund, we have included a \$50 million stream available to support mobile Internet projects that primarily benefit Indigenous peoples, including projects along highways and roads where mobile connectivity is lacking.