

# Questions and Responses for Election 2023

## MLA candidates – Shane Thompson

Questions were sent on behalf of the NWT Association of Communities to all Member of Legislative Assembly Candidates about issues important to communities in the Northwest Territories. We will follow up with the elected members throughout the term of the 20th Assembly.

1. NWT communities have faced a persistent funding shortfall, which became more apparent with the 2023 review. Despite commitments by the Legislative Assembly, this underfunding issue has persisted for years. Will you commit to the funding to address this persistent funding gap of nearly \$40 million/year for community governments in the NWT and provide them with the permanent resources they require?

**Response:** In the 19th Assembly, part of the mandate was to commit and provide the 5 million dollars of the 25 million of new initiatives. This was 20% of the new initiative funding for the four years. This was done.

The other thing the department did was complete the review of the three program areas (O&M, Water & Sewer and Capital) in the 19th Assembly in partnership with NWTAC and LGANT committees. This was completed before the 20th Assembly as originally plan.

The Department is working with both committees to implement the recommendations over a period of time in the 20th Assembly.

2. What steps will you take to ensure that these communities can continue to afford to deliver these services?

**Response:** As we did in the 19th Assembly, all 19 MLAs need to come together to develop the mandate for the 20th Assembly. I believe this will be a topic of discussion for sure.

The other part that the new Minister needs to do is continue to work with his counterparts (Ministers) from Nunavut and Yukon to work on a deal with the Federal Government to increase infrastructure funding. The first step steps have been done and a face to face meeting with the Federal Minister in the new year (January) to further strengthen the ideas we shared with him on a proposal.

3. The 37% budget shortfall makes climate change in the NWT even more difficult for communities to address. How will you help communities in the NWT become more resilient in the face of climate change, and what funding priorities will you establish to address these challenges, including disaster mitigation?

**Response:** As I said in question number two, all 19 MLAs need to come together to develop the mandate for the 20th Assembly. I believe this will be a topic of discussion for sure.

In the 19th Assembly, NWTAC (with help from ECC) was able to apply for and received just over 20 million dollars to help communities build firebreaks around the 29 forested communities. I hope to see this work be done and help communities be more resilient to climate change factors.

In the 20th Assembly, the GNWT needs an updated NWT emergency plan that enhances GNWT and community government training, increased capacity for emergency response, and evacuation across all NWT communities.

4. Are you committed to investing in municipal infrastructure and initiatives to address and prevent the effects of climate change and making it a top priority for the territorial government, particularly considering catastrophic wildfires that threaten entire communities? How will you ensure communities battling inadequate funding and legislative restrictions have the necessary resources?

**Response:** As I said in question number two and three, all 19 MLAs need to come together to develop the mandate for the 20th Assembly. I believe this will be a topic of discussion for sure.

5. The education system in the NWT has faced criticism for failing to provide students with fundamental abilities. The purpose of the recently passed Bill 81 is to recognize the duties of Indigenous peoples and governments, clarify responsibilities, and increase parental involvement in education. Considering these amendments, do the modifications adequately address the deficiencies in the NWT education system, or is an Auditor General Review of the education system still required?

**Response:** I would encourage the 20th Assembly to finish the Education Act that was started in the 19th Assembly. This involves reach out to all residents and communities / indigenous governments (Bands / Regional Governments) and asking for their input on improving our education system. Once this is done, I believe it will help improve our education system.

6. How do you intend to ensure educational facilities in the NWT implement the new legislative changes proposed in Bill 81 to enhance education, emphasizing addressing deficiencies and ensuring students graduate with the required skills?

**Response:** Same as part of question five, I would encourage the 20th Assembly to finish the Education Act that was started in the 19th Assembly. This involves reach out to all residents and communities / indigenous governments (Bands / Regional Governments) and asking for their input on improving our education system. Once this is done, I believe it will help improve our education system.

7. The issues of homelessness, mental health, and addiction are complex and interconnected. How do you propose to resolve the homelessness crisis in Northern communities and improve access to affordable housing?

**Response:** In the 19th Assembly, we seen the GNWT working on addressing housing issues (increase GNWT housing stock and including working with indigenous governments on accessing Federal funding) and coming up with a homelessness strategy. This work needs to continue in the 20th Assembly.

8. How will you ensure that mental health and addiction services are accessible and adequately funded to enhance the well-being of all Northwest Territories residents?

**Response:** As I said in question number two, three and four, all 19 MLAs need to come together to develop the mandate for the 20th Assembly. I believe this will be a topic of discussion for sure.