

January 27, 2020
Yellowknife South Constituency Meeting
Stanton Suites Hotel Boardroom

Total in attendance: 19

The following information is a summary of the key and emerging issues of Yellowknife South that were discussed amongst the people present and MLA Caroline Wawzonek. They are in no particular order.

Public Service Act (PSA)

Relationships and communication are key when moving forward with the opening of the Public Service Act. Relationships with the Government, GNWT Staff, and UNW will be repaired and considered. Lines of communication will remain open and transparent.

Child and Family Services

Although not specifically mentioned in the priorities of the 19th Legislature, the Auditor General's Report will continue to be worked and built upon. Other areas of the priorities do speak to the welfare and betterment for the children of the North.

A follow up on the status of the implementation of the Auditor General's recommendation will be made and shared with constituents.

Childcare

Clarification on the childcare subsidy provided for MLAs was provided as there has been a misunderstanding of what was being provided. Daytime childcare costs are not covered. Subsidy covers the times when an MLA is extended past the regular hours of work, for instance, when Session goes over, evening meeting with constituents, boards, NGOs, or travel away from home. This subsidy will hopefully encourage those that are single parents, partners with shift workers, the understanding that they can become MLAs as a barrier to the position has been removed.

Questions on if subsidy would be extended to the general public, or if universal childcare would be introduced to the NWT. Childcare is a priority of the 19th Legislative Assembly, which will include looking into how regulatory and instructional ways of how spaces are used. Requests for the consideration of those that work shifts, at mine sites, and longer hours, were asked to be taken into consideration when developing any new regulations or legislation on childcare.

Education

Education is a priority of the Yellowknife South constituents with concern for the level of education being provided to the students in Yellowknife and the North.

Yellowknife has the benefit of attracting more professionals to the area as it is the capital city, which means that more children are prepared when they arrive at school. Being the capital city however also means that there are more supports for students with special needs, which leads to a higher intake of students with needs in the classroom resulting in teachers and schools not being provided the supports they need.

Constituents would like to see better outcomes from schools and children, with an understanding that there are different needs for students in Yellowknife than the communities.

Education in the North is a priority of 19th Legislature, with particular focus on children, with schools becoming a place where families are happy to send their children, and a place where kids would like to be. An Auditor General's Report will be released shortly, and will be shared with constituents.

Incarceration & Justice System

Unpacking the numbers from the media release on the incarceration rate of indigenous people, a high percentage of the individuals are on remand (in other words, individuals are not serving time for a conviction, they are individuals who cannot get bail, or other circumstances as they await trial). The number of individuals who are there on short stays is also high.

Looking at what can be done from the territorial level will include looking into what can be done to encourage the uptake of diversions.

Climate Change

All were happy to see that climate change was made a priority of the 19th Legislative Assembly. People generally felt that finances should be put towards renewable energy, and that the Federal Government should continue to support the GNWT in providing subsidies for programs for individuals who would like to become more environmentally conscious (ex. Solar panels and home renovations).

People would be interested to see more data on climate change coming out of the NT.

People would be interested in seeing how they could be more environmentally aware a proactive in their own households.

Finance

- Equalisation Payments/ First Finance Minister meeting
The North needs to catch up on social infrastructure as it is felt that we are behind on all fronts, people need to see that the NWT is a good investment.
- 'March Madness'
A general feeling on the spending of the GNWT in the month of March was that it was not necessary. People felt that departments should be allowed to carry over the money to the next fiscal year without being penalised and that there were no procedures in place to reward departments on being efficient.
- City of Yellowknife Funding Formula
Discussions are being had with the City of Yellowknife and the Association of Communities to try and come up with solutions to the funding formula for Yellowknife.
- Self-Government
There was some concern from constituents on the financing/budgeting for the NWT as a whole as more of the First Nation Governments continue to build capacity within their Self-Government agreements and communities; as Federal money will begin to be transferred to the First Nations instead of the GNWT.
- P3s (Public Private Partnerships)
Constituents showed concern for the use of P3s, specifically with how they related to the Hospital. There are some process changes coming and there are plans to make the public aware of the outcomes of the process change, perhaps through electronic means or town hall. (People would like to see both).

Meaning of a Progressive Cabinet

Constituents were curious as to what Premier Cochrane meant when she said that the Cabinet was going to be progressive. The general consensus in the room was that it probably meant that communication between MLAs and Ministers would be more open, and would avail themselves to the public and their constituents more.

Polytechnic University

There is some public concern on how the Polytechnic University is being handled, that they have noticed a change in tone since the election, and are concerned that this will be an Aurora College 2.0.

Concern on location of Polytechnic was also discussed as majority felt that there was a general anti-Yellowknife sentiment, but majority felt that Yellowknife would be the better choice for the location, and should take a lead role on the development.

Recruitment and Retention

There was a lot of discussion on how the GNWT plans to recruit new residents, as well as retain the population they already have.

People felt that students returning to the North are unable to find higher skilled/paid jobs. Even those who had a mentorship or internship are leaving as they get hired for the year but do not get kept on in order to bring in new interns. Others come in with a hope to bring their ideas, their expertise, and make change within the GNWT, only to discover they are constantly hitting road blocks. Exit interviews are rarely, if ever done.

Private sector would also like to see a program brought in that would allow them to compete properly with the GNWT as there is a large discrepancy in what the private sector can offer individuals and what the GNWT can offer.

Some felt that the argument of cost of living in the NWT is more political talk than anything, specifically those with all level government jobs and mines. It is felt that people need to be more reflective on what they are actually spending their money on, needs vs. wants.

Proper supports for families with special needs was felt to be another issue with the retention of families in the North, is the GNWT making all supports available, specifically, Jordan's Principal can assist so many people, can the GNWT provide more reassurance to families that their children will be taken care of?

Specific Follow Ups for Yellowknife South

- Status of Auditor General Report for Children Services
- Technology in the communities is helping with the Beaufort Delta pilot on virtual classrooms, is there a plan to expand upon that?
- Provide digital copies of current Auditor General Reports
- Find information for individuals looking to be more environmentally conscious at home, any subsidy program information available as well.
- Provide senior subsidy information