

## Candidate Responses to Questions

**Ambe Chenemu – Yellowknife Center**

### *1. How have you engaged with people with disabilities in your campaign?*

I have knocked at almost every door in the Yellowknife Centre Riding and will continue to do so until I have been able to talk to every constituent who is willing to talk to me. It does not matter where the person lives or their ability to communicate well and easily with me, I will continue in my efforts to talk and listen to everyone who wants to engage.

I understand disability as I also come from a disadvantaged background and have had to work my way through numerous barriers to be recognized and heard. Life does not treat everyone fairly even though we know it should. I empathize with anyone who has had battles to fight because I have had to fight many myself. I know what it is like to be a fighter and will always listen. It is one of the reasons why I chose to run because I want all people everywhere to be heard since I know what it is like to be ignored. People throughout the territories have a right to government access and services. We are all the same with different levels of functioning yet any level of functioning does not make one person any better or less than another. We are the same and all of our blood is the same color. In fact, it is our duty to stand up for those who have difficulty standing up for themselves because that is a measure of our own humanity. Developing our humanity, our empathy, our ability to care is what makes life worth living and is in fact the only reason why we are here at all.

### *Is your campaign accessible?*

I am easily reached by phone and I make myself available at every door so that people do not have to come to me if they find that difficult. I can be reached on Facebook or on the phone and am willing to come to the home or any preferred location if that is what my constituent wants. That offer stands now and after the election when they real work of serving my constituents begins. I have made it clear that I am available anytime and anywhere.

### *What steps have you taken to make your campaign accessible?*

I have been attending all public forums that I have been invited to and am happy to make myself available to concerned citizens there. I have visited the Baker Centre and Inclusion NWT and will continue to do so both in the lead up to the election and after when the hard work begins. I know what it is like to be discounted and disregarded which is why I have a special place in my heart for anyone with any type of disadvantage and is, in fact, one of the reasons why I am running. Because I know what it is like, I can easily empathize with struggle. I can easily empathize with emotional pain and suffering and as others have been there to give me a hand, so I want to give others a hand too.

### *2. Are you aware of these issues and have you contacted and engaged with the NWT Disabilities Council to discuss issues of concern?*

I am aware of the issues having lived in various locations in the NWT and have seen the disparity of services provided especially in more remote communities. I understand that too often the client and the caretakers of the client are left alone without services and support and no matter where you are, I am available. Life sometimes dishes out more challenges for some than for others and I understand what it is like to receive more than your fair share. That is why the disadvantaged have and always will have, regardless of outcomes, a special place in my heart. I understand suffering and am here to make the plight of those who suffer easier as others have done for me.

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3. *Are you familiar with the Disability Action Plan released by the 18th Assembly and the Disability Action Plan Final Report released in October 2023? There was a significant lack of commitment to the plan by the 19th Legislative Assembly, with only 26% of the Action items completed and most marked as "in progress" with vague descriptions as to how or why they have not come to fruition.*

I am familiar with the Disability Action Plan and have every intention of engaging with that plan fully when I am in office. I understand that the previous assembly was not able to fully meet needs of this plan as it was preoccupied with COVID the evacuation and then the election. But there will always be something and that can no longer be an excuse. It either is a priority or it is not. For me it is. But I am new in the position with a clean slate and it is a slate dedicated to resolving the many issues we have in the downtown core.

I understand that many of those revolve around being homeless, substance abuse, trauma and physical, emotional and mental disability some of which we are born with and others that we are subjected to. I understand this. I have lived in and around it for many years. But I also understand that the healing is in the listening, it is in the provision of services, supports and acknowledgement of suffering. It is not in victim blaming or over identification with colonial rights and practices. It is in listening to the wounded and under privileged and understanding with our full hearts that as much as me, they count too.

Healing disability and making some of them easier to live with come from robust services and teams of people dedicated to the well-being of others. To that end, then, I hope that we will focus on attracting the right people here and developing educational programs that we can help with adequate staffing and happy staff and the appropriate amount of funding to provide our vulnerable population with the support they need. This problem will never go away without support which comes from services and robust treatment options. But it is through providing that support that the entire community and in fact the territory becomes a healthier place to be. Helping the disabled which includes all forms of disability, helps all of us -- not just them. I am committed to giving the council and all disabled people the full support they need now and more importantly after the election when I can roll my sleeves up and get to work. I am so impressed by the people helping me because I believe they are with me because they care about their fellow northerners too. All of us have big hearts and put healing and well-being ahead of every other priority.

### **Bruce Valpy - Yellowknife North**

I, Bruce Valpy, MLA Candidate for Yellowknife North, support and will work to advance all 10 steps of the action plan proposed by the NWT Disabilities Council. Sadly, I cannot sign off on the declaration as requested because elected or not, I will not have the power 'to ensure'. I can't mislead either the Disabilities Council nor the voters of Yellowknife North. No one position, either political or administrative, has the power to ensure such results. I do have some understanding of the needs. Our lack of progress on meeting them is painful in so many ways to the people who have a right to expect public resources to be distributed fairly according to outcomes. I will commit to giving voice to those people if I am elected, starting with a meeting with the relevant minister and staff. I appreciate your advocacy. It's exactly what change needs.

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**Caroline Wawzonek** – *Yellowknife South*  
*NWT Disabilities Council 10-point pledge*

1. I commit to asking Housing NWT and the Department of Infrastructure what their current building standards are for publicly funded infrastructure including whether those standards incorporate “universal design” and any and all best practices to maximize accessibility. There has been strong recognition that the GNWT should not unilaterally determine what the needs of a community might be for types of housing or culturally appropriate designs for housing, let alone be the sole level of government seeking or receiving federal dollars. As such, I also commit to asking Housing NWT to raise this question on accessible design generally for all housing and common areas as well as the specific proportion of units that meet a definition of accessible with the NWT Housing Forum so that all levels of government and organizations involved in the delivery of community housing are striving towards greater accessibility.
2. Yes. As Minister of Finance, I was part of the discussions that resulted in increases to Housing NWT’s current programs for homeowners. I will commit to raise the issue of further or additional funds that accommodate accessibility and help people stay in their homes.
3. I commit to raise the need for maintaining Housing NWT’s properties in a manner that maintains their safe habitability for all persons including people with disabilities. As with point 1, any specific target should be determined with the leadership of the relevant community.
4. Ideally every town, village and hamlet across Canada would have the space, facilities and professional staff to accommodate individuals in their homes without the need to move to different communities. Unfortunately, that is not currently a realistic scenario, particularly from the perspective of professional staffing. I cannot commit to repatriate all people, many of whom have complex needs that I cannot honestly say we would have the capacity to best serve in the NWT in the near-term future.
5. I commit to asking the Department of Health and Social Services to review the proposed income thresholds for Extended Health Benefits and to consider doing a living wage calculation. I further will ask that they meet with the NWT Disabilities Council to review the policy and proposed changes before final.
6. Agreed. Transportation corridors are essential and I believe there may be federal dollars on the table for municipalities to improve their local transportation infrastructure. Any future transportation networks should consider the needs of all residents.
7. Current levels of educational assistance rely heavily on the Federally funded Jordan’s Principle funding. I would commit to advocating for not only the continuation of this funding but to make it more long term so that those relying on it can better plan for their learning or care needs.
8. Agreed.
9. Agreed.
10. A UN Convention is signed by a state party. I commit to familiarize myself with its contents and do better to uphold to its spirit and intention in my actions as a political representative.

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### **Deanna Cornfield - Frame Lake**

I commit to fully supporting all these items, see disclaimer below as to why I cannot sign the pledge:

1. Ensure that all future housing and public building development incorporates universal design and is affordable. That all housing projects have a minimum standard of 20% accessible living units and that all common areas are accessible.
2. Advocate for increased program resources and funding for people with disabilities to make required renovations to accommodate their accessibility needs and remain in their home.
3. Ensure that public housing maintains properties to ensure safe habitability for people with disabilities and to engage in renovations to make a minimum 20% of their housing units, in each community, accessible for living.
4. To commit to repatriating people with disabilities, who are from the Northwest Territories, back to the territory and whenever possible their home communities/regions, who have been sent out of territory for care. To commit to working to increase the services and support available to people with disabilities in the NWT to ensure that all residents are able to live with their own families and within their own communities.
5. To withdraw the current Policy 49.07 and further engage disability organizations, specifically the NWT Disabilities Council, to review the policy and impacts with quantitative data associated with cost savings, cost of implementation and numbers of people impacted. Then to present a new draft for informed public consultation.
6. To ensure that the 20th Legislative Assembly works with Municipalities, Communities, Indigenous governments, and Disability NGOs to help build accessible transportation networks and infrastructure in regional centers and communities.
7. To ensure current levels of educational assistance for learning supports, for students with disabilities across the lifespan, are not reduced and consultation occur to required increases to ensure inclusive and accessible education across the territory.
8. To have government department representatives work with the NWT Disabilities Council, Disability NGOs, and Indigenous groups to review the Final Report for the 2018 Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities and to develop an action plan with a concrete evaluation plan so that moving forward the Action Plan reflects and addresses the needs of people with disabilities.
9. To recognize that Disability is its own distinct, marginalized minority and not a sub-category of other groups and must be considered and consulted as such. This will be done with on-going scheduled consultation between the Minister Responsible for Persons with Disabilities and the NWT Disabilities Council. In addition, the Standing Committee on Social Development engages with the NWT Disabilities Council, which did not occur during the 19th Legislative Assembly even after many requests by the NWT Disabilities Council.
10. That you will uphold The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the CRPD), the international treaty that was adopted in 2006 to help protect the rights of people with disabilities around the world. Canada and 183 other states parties have accepted the legal obligations contained in the CRPD, to which the Northwest Territories is committed.

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**Jon Howe - Yellowknife North**

Did not sign pledge as stated did not support Items 1,3,5,6, and 10.

**Kate Reid – Great Slave**

1. *How have you engaged with people with disabilities in your campaign? Is your campaign accessible? What steps have you taken to make your campaign accessible?*

I have engaged with people with disabilities in my campaign at doors and via email. I have made my campaign more accessible by including multiple lines of communication available so as to ensure folks with all needs are able to get in touch with me, or seek out information about me and my priorities in many ways/formats (phone, texting, online, newspapers, door to door canvassing). I have included closed captioning on my weekly social media videos, offered to answer questions through multiple means, and have been in contact with constituents with disabilities by email. I also have a ground level, no barrier campaign office, where people can meet with me.

2. *Are you aware of these issues and have you contacted and engaged with the NWT Disabilities Council to discuss issues of concern?*

I reached out this past summer to meet with staff from the NWT Disabilities Council – unfortunately our schedules did not allow for a meeting, and then unfortunately, the evacuation happened. I would be pleased to meet during the election period with staff once the “Haunted Hootenanny” is complete and they have more capacity. I will be advocating for Standing Committee on Social Development to meet with proactively with important stakeholders and services providers like the NWT Disabilities Council.

3. *Are you familiar with the Disability Action Plan released by the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly and the Disability Action Plan Final Report released in October 2023? There was a significant lack of commitment to the plan by the 19<sup>th</sup> Assembly, with only 26% of the Action items completed and most marked as “in progress” with vague descriptions as to how or why they have not come to fruition.*

I am familiar with both of these documents. I have reviewed the Final Report this past week. In my campaign priorities, I discuss a key need for government response to communities, including the disability community, to fundamentally change. The role of government is to support communities by paying attention to residents and to be guided by their priorities, concerns and needs. Government should spend less time defending and supporting old policies and processes and spend more time listening to residents, and the organizations that represent and serve them, so government can begin to offer the kinds of programs and services that match the needs and priorities that residents have and need addressed. When elected, I will advocate loudly and often that the GNWT meaningfully involve stakeholders in policy and program development, and fully incorporate concerns into policies and programs. And where and when they do not – adequately explaining why.

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**Katrina Nokleby - Great Slave**

1. *How have you engaged with people with disabilities in your campaign? Is your campaign accessible? What steps have you taken to make your campaign accessible?*

My campaign does not have a fixed office rather I have offered to come to residents to meet with them at their home or at a place that they can access. I have met with Tony Procure, Natural Signer, to discuss the possible use of ASL by international governments and how I can make myself and my materials more accessible to others.

2. *Are you aware of these issues and have you contacted and engaged with the NWT Disabilities Council to discuss issues of concern?*

I am aware of these issues through my work as an MLA in the 19th Assembly. I have had constituents reach out to me to advocate for accessibility and duty to accommodate in their workplaces. I did try a few times to arrange a meeting with Denise McKee, Executive Director of the Council especially regarding the extended benefits policy which unfairly targets people living with disabilities. I regret that we were unable to get together and would engage with the council at the earliest opportunity in the 20th Assembly.

3. *Are you familiar with the Disability Action Plan released by the 18th Assembly and the Disability Action Plan Final Report released in October 2023? There was a significant lack of commitment to the plan by the 19th Legislative Assembly, with only 26% of the Action items completed and most marked as "in progress" with vague descriptions as to how or why they have not come to fruition.*

The referenced Final Report was issued as the 19th Assembly was wrapping up and unfortunately, I have not had time to go through it in great detail. However, I would like to see an action plan devised based on both documents early in the 20th Assembly that can be worked on immediately to improve the situation for people living with disabilities. I also think we need to create a Building Code Act in the first quarter of the 20th such that accessible design is mandatory for all new builds in the NWT. If re-elected I plan to hold Cabinet and departments accountable for improving the situation for residents.

**Michael Wallington – Hay River North**

As a parent of a daughter and a husband to a wife with dyslexia and a foster parent to many children with various disabilities, I am keenly aware of the lack of resources and awareness that both need to be increased for people to live their fullest life and not be excluded from society. I support all these measures and see them as a bare minimum.

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### **Rocky Simpson – Hay River South**

1. *How have you engaged with people with disabilities in your campaign? Is your campaign accessible? What steps have you taken to make your campaign accessible?*

For accessibility and during this campaign I have committed to home visits for those who have mobility or disability issues.

2. *Are you aware of these issues and have you contacted and engaged with the NWT Disabilities Council to discuss issues of concern?*

My interaction is directly with those persons who have disabilities. I am always available to discuss issues and solutions to address gaps in the system.

3. *Are you familiar with the Disability Action Plan released by the 18th Assembly and the Disability Action Plan Final Report released in October 2023? There was a significant lack of commitment to the plan by the 19th Legislative Assembly, with only 26% of the Action items completed and most marked as “in progress” with vague descriptions as to how or why they have not come to fruition.*

I am familiar with the Disability Action Plan that was released in the 18th Assembly and the 2023 Final Report. I am committed to actioning initiatives identified in the report. It is also important that the NWT Disabilities Council keep in contact with all MLA's throughout the next assembly as it your expertise and knowledge that is relied on.

### **Shane Thompson - Nahendeh**

In regards to signing this document, I support the idea of the 20th Assembly to work with the NWT Disabilities Council on improving the life's of residents with Disabilities. This would include encouraging the HSS Minister and SCOSD to meet with the board to have conversations and come up with feasible ideas to help improve the residents life's. I promise to bring forth this as part of our mandate however, there are 18 other MLAs that will work together to develop this mandate. I believe it should be included in how we are going to need to improve the HSS system (including Seniors, People with Disabilities, Mental Health, Foster Families, Social Services and Health issues).

### **Shauna Morgan - Yellowknife North**

1. *How have you engaged with people with disabilities in your campaign? Is your campaign accessible? What steps have you taken to make your campaign accessible?*

I have made it my mission to visit all of my constituents at their homes, to take part in all debates, including the one hosted at the Baker Centre, and to provide campaign information online. I chose not to rent a constituency office and instead chose to invest in the community by hosting events at local institutions in my district, most of which are accessible. Some residents I have chatted with at their homes have pointed out that much of the infrastructure around town is not safe or accessible to those with mobility issues—for example, no railings on stairways. One thing that has struck me as I go door-to-door is how difficult it would be for any candidate with a disability to run for election—at least to do door-to-door canvassing—as it would be next to impossible for someone with mobility issues to navigate all of the stairs, etc. I would like to follow up with Elections NWT and the Disabilities Council to find

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out if this barrier has been considered and how candidates with disabilities might be supported to stand on equal footing with other candidates should they choose to run.

*2. Are you aware of these issues and have you contacted and engaged with the NWT Disabilities Council to discuss issues of concern?*

I have work on many files that intersect with the priorities of the NWT Disabilities Council and met with the Disabilities Council on several occasions during my two terms on City Council, particularly with regard to the City's Accessibility Audit implementation and on the issue of summer day camp support staff. I served as Chair of the Community Advisory Board on Homelessness, which included a representative from the community serving people with disabilities, and I have served on the board of the Yellowknife Women's Society. Two of my campaign priorities are improving affordable housing and health services.

*3. Are you familiar with the Disability Action Plan released by the 18th Assembly and the Disability Action Plan Final Report released in October 2023? There was a significant lack of commitment to the plan by the 19th Legislative Assembly, with only 26% of the Action items completed and most marked as "in progress" with vague descriptions as to how or why they have not come to fruition.*

I am aware of the Disability Action Plan, and have read the final report. I can understand your concerns; a limited amount of work has proceeded, compounded with a lack of meaningful communication between the territorial government and your organisation. A campaign promise of mine is to improve communication and meaningful collaboration between government and NGOs. I hope to achieve this by building on my experience of working with NGOs during my time on City Council.

### **Stacie Smith - Great Slave**

*1. How have you engaged with people with disabilities in your campaign? Is your campaign accessible? What steps have you taken to make your campaign accessible?*

I am mindful of the meeting venues, ensuring their accessibility. Additionally, I have consistently extended my assistance by offering to personally transport individuals to the meetings. While going door to door, I understand that not everyone can promptly reach the door. Therefore, I approach each situation with patience and respect. I kindly inquire if they require any assistance or support.

*2. Are you aware of these issues and have you contacted and engaged with the NWT Disabilities Council to discuss issues of concern?*

Having served on the Community Advisory Board for three years and on council for five years, I am aware of these issues. My engagement with the disabilities council has provided me with valuable insights and knowledge. Moreover, on a personal level, I have firsthand experience with disabilities as my father and son both face adversities. Witnessing their struggles has fueled my advocacy efforts and reinforced the significance of having proper support in place to enable them to lead fulfilling lives.

I have reached out to the disabilities council to discuss issues but have also engaged with those that are disabled.



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I am familiar with the Disability Action Plan from the 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly and the Disability Action Plan Final Report from October. I will endeavour to advocate for the timely implementation and completion of the Action Plan while also engaging with the Disabilities Council to evaluate the progress.

### **Stuart Wray - Frame Lake**

1. I have engaged people with disabilities in my campaign by meeting them when door knocking. I advocated for sign language to be made an official language of the NWT at the Frame Lake Debate. I have made my campaign accessible by including written text on my videos on social media and ensured my meet and greet was in the Frame Lake area so it is not far to travel for people.
2. I am aware of some issues but not all of them. I have not contacted the Disabilities Council but will pledge to in the future.
3. I was not aware of the Disabilities Action Plan and I will lobby the government to implement any actions that have been developed.