

KATRINA NOKLEBY

FOR **MLA GREAT SLAVE**



Thank you to the three Yellowknife school boards for the opportunity to speak at your forum and for giving me the opportunity to respond to these questions.

1. Trades as a path

Trades are a critical part of the NWT industry, with many students developing an interest in this career path through the program offerings in our schools. Whether or not they receive a high school diploma, apprentices must pass an academic exam as part of their entrance to trades.

Trades in the NWT are affected by many factors, including Aurora College, the possibility of a polytechnic university, the safety and fair treatment of young apprentices, and incentives for employers to take on apprentices and tradespeople.

How do you plan to build on the foundations that we have, and remove barriers to our youth becoming part of the trades' workforce?

We need to continue to promote the trades as a viable profession for youth in the NWT. We should create opportunities such as job shadowing and career fairs to expose children to trades at younger age. Since funding is available to help companies pay for apprentices while they are learning on the job, they are incentivised to have apprentices so hiring apprentices isn't an issue for them. Instead, we should explore incentives for the journeyman to train the apprentice. I have heard that it is considered a nuisance to be a mentor. Take for example someone on "performance pay" they are paid by the job, not by the hour. Stopping to teach or educate someone on the work being executed means it will take additional time to complete the task that the journeyman but with no additional pay. As a result, apprentices often don't get the attention they need to learn and be successful. We should look to create a program that in addition to incentivising the company also incentivises mentors to take on apprentices and teach them properly without it being a burden to themselves.

We also need to look at academic equivalences for students who may not be able to pass an academic exam but have comparable skills learned from cultural or community activities. We should provide tutoring and mentoring support to students wanting to study for the academic exam in order to enter a trade. Particularly students in the communities where the level of education does not appear to be the same as in Yellowknife.

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2. Education Reform

In the closing days of the 18th Assembly the GNWT Minister of Education called for the need of a reform of our Educational System. A recent CBC article stated “In the 2016-17 school year, only eight per cent of students enrolled in Grade 9 in small communities achieved acceptable standards in standardized math tests. In regional centres, 41.2 per cent of students were at an acceptable level. In English language arts, 17.7 per cent of Grade 9 students in small communities were at an acceptable level, while in regional centres 53 per cent were.”

What do you believe needs to be done so that this new Educational Reform actually produces the positive results we all want when previous Education Reforms failed to meaningfully produce positive results?

We need to ensure children and families are healthy so that children can learn. The first five years of a child’s life are critical, and we need to increase awareness on the importance of reading to a child and proper nutrition. We need to deal with the poverty and addictions faced by many families in the North and the impacts these issues have on their children. We should continue to improve mental health supports for families including workers in the schools. We should be soliciting feedback from teachers and staff throughout the territory for what they see as the steps forward to improving education for all.

3. Universal Child Care

ECE commissioned a report regarding the benefits of Universal Child Care. Do you support universal child care in the NWT? What actions will you take to ensure this initiative moves ahead?

I support accessible and affordable child care in the NWT. Universal daycare would be wonderful, but I don’t know that we could afford it given our limited budget. Actual daycare space is an issue in the North, and I’d like to see the GNWT work on reducing the barriers and red tape for NGOs and other organizations trying to have facilities licensed. I’d also like to see the staffing ratios changed for afterschool care to be more reflective of ratios in a classroom. We need to ask organizations providing childcare for their input on the situation and how we could be doing better to ensure we make informed decisions going forward.

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4. School Funding

Currently funding for schools is determined on previous years enrolment, which does not take into consideration the needs of individual schools. What changes can be made to fully support schools based on actual student needs rather than simply on the enrolment numbers.

We should be assessing each specific community's needs in conjunction with community governments to determine the funding required to properly educate the children in those communities. We need to be better at predicting enrollment, which in a smaller community should not be difficult, and provide funding based on projected enrollment not past enrollment. Reviews should consider all the items that must be paid for out of those funds, including bussing and operations, and accommodate communities where higher costs of operations may be needed. If it costs more to operate a specific school, that additional money should not come out of the educational funding for the children attending that school.

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