

KATRINA NOKLEBY

FOR **MLA GREAT SLAVE**



Thank you to the NWT Disabilities Council for reaching out and giving me the opportunity to respond to these questions and for all the work you do in our community.

1. What do you think are the key barriers facing people with disabilities in the NWT?

When I speak with residents with disabilities in Great Slave a few key issues keep coming up:

- Accessibility to buildings and the lack of accessibility to washrooms within buildings, including in newly constructed government buildings where these barriers should have been eliminated during the building design phase.
- Having to relocate to Yellowknife to access services
- Lack of appropriate or adequate health and support services including provision of mobility and other devices.
- Lack of public education on the importance of ensuring that people with disabilities, in all communities, feel equal.

2. How have you engaged with people with disabilities in your campaign? What steps have you taken to make your campaign more accessible? Do you have a campaign office and is it accessible?

I attended the Yellowknife Association of Community Living annual fall BBQ on September 7th and read the literature they provided regarding the work they do to aid those with disabilities living in our community. I have engaged people with disabilities in my riding by arranging to meet with them in their homes when requested and by going door to door. I have allowed for adequate time to speak with residents who have expressed concerns, as I want to ensure I listen and learn what I must do to advocate on their behalf. As a generally able-bodied person (I do have a chronic illness, but the symptoms are manageable), I cannot profess to understand what life is like trying to navigate our northern cities, climate, and topography with a disability. I recognize I need to continuously educate myself to ensure I am effectively advocating for all NWT citizens living with a disability. I have made my campaign mobile, without a physical campaign headquarters, to ensure that everyone has the same access to me regardless of their ease of mobility.

3. Are you familiar with the Disability Action Plan released by the 18th Assembly? What are your priority items for this plan? How do you plan on advocating for these items?

- <https://www.gov.nt.ca/en/newsroom/government-releases-disabilityaction-plan>

I have familiarized myself with the Disability Action Plan and a few items stand out to me as a priority. 'Rehabilitation Supports for Children' as well as 'Mental Wellness for Children with Disabilities' would be high on my priorities list, as these would aid families in learning strategies

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and skills to better support their child living with a disability. 'Income Assistance' and 'Increased Access to Federal Benefits' would also be a priority as I have spoken with some families in my riding who struggle with the financial burden of having only one income to rely on when one partner is no longer able to work due to a disability. We need to get started implementing these programs and take a proactive approach by examining what we could be doing to ensure they are in place quickly without delays.

4. Are you familiar with the extended health benefits programs operating in the NWT? Are you committed to eliminating discrimination from the Specified Disease Conditions Program and introducing comprehensive supplementary health insurance for low income residents?

o <https://www.nwtautismsociety.org/advocacy>

o <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/nwt-government-programviolates-charter-rights-freedoms-1.5176840>

I support a review of the Specified Disease Conditions Program to see if the recommended additions to the list should be included and introducing comprehensive supplementary health insurance for low income residents. We would need to assess the financial impacts of these additions and the supplementary benefits to the budget and consider potentially staggering the increased funding over a period of time if the immediate impact is too great. This would allow our budget to adapt to the increased funding gradually rather than all at once. However, without more information I wouldn't be able to speak to how this would work at this time.

5. Are you committed to repatriating people with disabilities who are from the NWT back to their home communities/regions who have been sent out of territory for care? How will you work to increase the services and supports 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?

I am committed to doing what we can to repatriate people with disabilities back into their home communities/regions. We could undertake an assessment of a person's community with respect to their situation to determine the key issues that are preventing the person from living there with their family. After the assessment, an Action Plan could be developed to address any barriers identified and outlining solutions. Each community would need to have its own assessment undertaken and community-specific solutions identified instead of taking a blanket approach. The GNWT would then need to work with the community government to address the issues and reduce barriers. I've spoken before about Indigenous run senior homes within communities that could provide employment and training for residents. Perhaps these homes could include some assisted living facilities for people with disabilities where it's not feasible to adapt the family home to accommodate their needs.

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6. How do you plan to engage with the needs of people with disabilities in your constituency if you were to be elected? How do you plan to ensure that policies and programs implemented by the 19th Assembly are accessible to all NWT residents?

I would start by engaging the residents in my riding and asking them for their feedback and input, to better understand what they see as the issues that are important to them as a person living with a disability. I would commit to setting up regular meetings with them to ensure I stay up to date with respect to the issues affecting them. I would commit to working with medical experts and those knowledgeable in this area, such as the NWT Disabilities Council and the Yellowknife Association for Community Living, to ensure new policies and programs implemented by the GNWT are accessible to all residents. A review of GNWT policies and programs from an accessibility lens should be routinely conducted.

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