



August 30, 2019

Mr. Jagmeet Singh., M.P.
Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada
300 – 279 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5J9

Dear Mr. Singh,

As the federal election approaches this Fall, we draw your attention to the importance and uniqueness of our territories, both as home to diverse and unique populations of Canadians, and as a critical part of Canada's future as an Arctic and Northern Nation.

Northern Premiers have worked individually and as a collective to strengthen relationships with the federal government and to ensure Northern concerns are recognized and addressed. This includes active engagement on federal policy development so that national policy considers the unique needs and realities of territorial communities and people. Northerners are forward-looking people, and are keen to understand the intention of any incoming federal government.

We ask you to respond to the attached list of key questions to help better understand your views on territorial issues. We would like to be able to post these responses to our respective websites, with your permission.

We look forward to your response.

Thank you,

Sandy Silver
Premier of Yukon

Robert R. McLeod
Premier of Northwest Territories

Joe Savikataaq
Premier of Nunavut

Attachment: Northern Premiers' Letter to Federal Party Leaders

Northern Voices and Needs

We believe that any decisions about the North must include the input and engagement from the territorial governments.

QUESTION – Northern Voices

How will you ensure federal policy decisions involving the North engage Northern leaders?

Our territories are unique within Canada for many reasons. Important considerations include our remote communities and harsh climates, as well as our relatively small populations, our deficit of transportation, energy, municipal and communication infrastructure, and the challenge as public governments to providing high quality programs and services within this context.

QUESTION – Recognizing Unique Territorial Needs

What would you do to ensure territorial needs are recognized in federal planning and programs, including the territories limited fiscal capacity and small populations?

Strengthening Canada's Position in the Arctic

As international relations in the Arctic shift, and world powers increase their focus on valuable trade routes and other resources in Canada's North, a strong Arctic strategy is increasingly essential.

QUESTION – Strengthening Canada's Position in the Arctic

What critical investments will you make to strengthen Canada's position in the Arctic? How will you work with northerners, territorial governments, and Indigenous rights holders in this work?

Reconciliation with Indigenous Populations

Each territorial government has strong and productive relationships with local Indigenous governments and organizations. The relationships between public and Indigenous governments and organizations are key to policy development and effective program and service delivery. Respect, trust, and a continued commitment to strengthening working partnerships between the territorial and Indigenous governments and organizations are a shared priority and central to the future of the territories.

QUESTION – Reconciliation with Indigenous Populations

How will you support existing and forthcoming modern treaties and devolution agreements across the territories? How will you support continued dialogue and sharing of information with Indigenous people, governments and organizations in your work? Will you support the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission? How will you respond to the Calls to Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls?

Climate Change and the Environment

For the North, a changing climate is an immediate reality requiring strong action. Climate change impacts seen throughout the North are significant, and evidenced by:

- Greater coastal and river erosion
- Increasing permafrost thaw
- Changing ice conditions and longer ice-free seasons
- Increasing risk of extreme natural events, such as wildfires, wind storms and flooding
- New mammal, bird, insect and fish species moving north

These impacts have negative effects on the health, well-being and safety of northern residents, our culture and heritage, northern infrastructure and the viability of certain economic activities. Regional traditional knowledge informs us that communities feel these changes acutely.

Addressing and combatting climate change in the North will require support at the federal level to address the unique challenges and significant climate change impacts felt in the territories. Coordination and collaboration with Indigenous and community governments will be necessary as the North strives to fight, adapt to and mitigate climate change.

QUESTION – Climate Change

What action will you take to support the territories in their efforts to fight, adapt to and mitigate climate change including natural disasters? How does this approach integrate and respect the wealth of Indigenous knowledge in all three territories?

QUESTION – Environment

What will your approach be to working with territorial governments and Indigenous rights holders on other issues related to the environment, including species-at-risk?

Economic Development, Infrastructure and Energy Security

Strong and diversified economies are central to sustainable community wellness. The resource industry is a significant economic driver in the North, and it is important that the benefits gained from those resources remain in the North. Capacity-building continues to be important, including investment in local skill development. In addition, investment in communication and information technology is needed to build the innovation opportunities that are emerging in other regions of

Canada. We must take action to mitigate the increasing challenges caused by climate change and adapt to the current and emerging effects it has on agricultural sectors to address much needed food security. Infrastructure such as highways, roads, bridges, harbours, ports, airports, viable energy alternatives, telecommunications, municipal services and connections to hydroelectric grids are critical for economic diversification, reducing the costs of living, and the safe and secure movement of people and goods.

QUESTION – Economic Development

How will you work to support territorial economic development and diversification? How will you support community and regional capacity development? How will you support innovation?

QUESTION – Infrastructure and Energy Security

How do you believe critical Northern infrastructure regional land use planning and energy security needs will be best met? What do you believe are the greatest priorities in this area?

People

Northerners should have the same opportunities to build self-reliance, and live in healthy, vibrant and prosperous communities as other Canadians. The same challenges of remoteness, small populations and a lack of infrastructure, as well as ongoing intergenerational trauma contribute to funding and delivery challenges. These also influence social determinates of health from overcrowding, to poor nutrition, to the level of education attainment. Our citizens also face increasing numbers of complex chronic conditions.

Food security is a long standing issue in the North, especially in remote and isolated communities, Northerners deserve and have the right to access nutritional and affordable food. The current food subsidy program, Nutrition North, needs significant new investment to meet the needs of northern and isolated residents.

Mental illness and addiction is a pressing issue in the North where limited access to diverse services in rural and remote communities, persistent stigma, and housing shortages serve to contribute to negative mental health outcomes and increased problematic substance use. Culturally appropriate treatment as well as addressing housing shortages and homelessness in the North is essential.

QUESTION – Health

While health care is led by the territories, the federal government is a critical partner. How do you intend to work with the territories to fund health care in the north? How will you support the territories in improving the mental health and well-being of Northerners? How does your plan

integrate access to adequate housing that recognizes the role mental health and addiction in homelessness or substandard housing?

QUESTION – Food Security

What do you propose to do to address the high cost of food in remote communities and address food security?

QUESTION – Other Social Indicators of Health

How would your government support northerners in addressing other social indicators of health such as an ongoing shortage of adequate housing?