

Dear Federal candidates,

We, as Yukon First Nation leaders, have a responsibility to our Citizens when it comes to federal elections. We believe it is of utmost importance that our Citizens have answers to questions that are relevant to us, as First Nations, to make an informed decision.

We take great interest in the federal election. Our relationship with the federal government spans many generations and has weathered many difficult moments. Our relationship is now one of equals since we are governments.

In light of the upcoming elections, we would like to have your views on the four questions below. We want our Citizens to make an informed decision when they go to the polls. We will make your answers public through different channels including local media. Please make your answers as succinct as possible. We thank you in advance for taking the time to answer these questions.

Melissa Atkinson's response to the Yukon First Nation leaders' questions:

- 1. It is the Yukon First Nation's position that certain amendments to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Act (YESAA) proposed by Bill S-6, undermine the spirit and intent of our Final Agreements. The unilateral changes to YESAA are a breach of our agreements. If elected, what will you and your party do to right the wrong Bill S-6 imposed on the Yukon?**

An NDP Government, led by Tom Mulcair, will repeal Bill S-6 during the next session of Parliament. This legislation, passed with Conservative and Liberal agreement in the Senate, undermines the spirit and intent of the Yukon Final Agreements.

Senate Bill S 6 was introduced by the unelected Yukon Conservative Senator Dan Lang. The non-negotiated amendments to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-economic Assessment Act (YESAA) have unilaterally amended Yukon's environment and socio-economic assessment process. I have heard the concerns of Yukoners that this will bring further uncertainty and harm to Yukon's economy.

I support Yukon First Nations in their fight against this undemocratic legislation. I predict it will be struck down by the Supreme Court.

2. Self-government Agreements empower Yukon Self-Governing First Nations to govern ourselves in a manner that is responsive to the needs and interests of our people. Acting in good faith and ensuring that our agreements are implemented is crucial to their success. The Government of Canada signed these agreements and often seems to forget its obligations. How will you and your government ensure that the implementation of our agreements is a priority; is done in a timely manner; and respects their spirit and intent?

Treaty Implementation discussions have been a frustrating process for all involved, primarily because Canada has been slow to or has refused in some instances to provide the proper funding to Yukon First Nations implementing their First Nation Final and Self Government Agreements.

An NDP government will work with the Land Claims Agreement Coalition (LCAC) to address issues identified in the LCAC Implementation Policy.

New Democrats recognize the inherent right to self-government. Yukon First Nation Self Government Agreement financial transfer agreements require the parties to engage in intergovernmental negotiations – we will do that.

We will work with Yukon First Nations to ensure sustainable, predictable, reliable long-term funding. We will ensure that Self Governing First Nations have equitable access to programs and services available to aboriginal people across Canada. We want to build a new relationship with aboriginal people across Canada based on honour and respect.

3. There are a staggering number of missing and murdered Aboriginal women across the country, a problem that has visited the Yukon, as well. What is your position on a national inquiry for missing and murdered Aboriginal women?

An NDP Government will establish an Inquiry into missing, stolen and murdered Aboriginal women within 100 days of forming Government.

New Democrats will develop a coordinated federal response to violence against Aboriginal women, led by Aboriginal communities and organizations, with sustained and multi-year funding sufficient to include expanded access to shelter and transition houses to support women fleeing violence.

4. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) completed their work this year and made 94 broad and diverse recommendations for repairing the relationship between First Nations and Canada, a vital step in making our country whole. Of those recommendations, what do you see as the most important to address? What will your party do to ensure the recommendations made by the TRC are implemented?

Upon release of the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, NDP Leader Tom Mulcair said in his statement that –

"We are determined to act upon the report of the Commission. We will consult with Indigenous people and establish which of the recommendations require the most pressing attention.

...

The government must act immediately in the areas of education, child protection and health care in order to put an end to the inequalities and sorry legacy of residential schools. "

The New Democratic Party recognizes that there is no easy route to reconciliation. It is a process that must involve all Canadians and all levels of government. A New Democratic government is committed to providing the necessary federal leadership.

As Yukon's Member of Parliament, I will make implementing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission a priority. I look forward to hearing from Yukoners on these issues.

Please provide your answers by September 15, 2015 to:

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