



September 02, 2021

The Honourable Erin O'Toole, P.C., C.D., M.P.  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Conservative Party of Canada  
1720 - 130 ALBERT STREET  
OTTAWA ON K1P 5G4

Dear Honourable O'Toole:

I am writing to you on behalf of the people of the Northwest Territories (NWT) to seek your party's views on how the Government of Canada should work with, promote, and support the people, governments, economic sectors, and environment of the NWT.

The NWT plays an important role within the Canadian federation. Our geological resources have contributed to Canada's growth and prosperity. Indigenous relations in our territory have helped set the tone for the rest of the country. Our geographical location empowers us to play a unique and vital role in the protection of our country's sovereignty. At the same time, our territory currently faces a number of unique challenges.

Our governing context is complex. The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) serves one of the smallest populations in Canada, spread over one of the largest and most diverse landscapes. We work closely with many different Indigenous governments that are in varying stages of negotiating and implementing their land, resource, and self-government rights.

We have an economic base that relies heavily on resource extraction and will require support and investment to stimulate both diversification and new resource development. We have a significant infrastructure gap that impacts economic development, the cost of living, and the quality of life of our residents.

Climate change hits very close to home for our communities, with increased flooding and fires and with some communities having a very real need to consider relocation as the result of permafrost melting and slumping and coastal erosion.

Our population is diverse. Half is Indigenous—Dene, Métis, or Inuit—and many individuals are still dealing with the generational social impacts of residential schools and other historical systemic policies directed at Indigenous peoples.

We need a supportive federal government partner that acknowledges residents as important and contributing members of Canadian society who should experience the same level of services and opportunities as compared to the rest of Canada.

With this context in mind, I offer the following questions for your consideration:

If elected, what will your party do to ensure the GNWT has the fiscal flexibility and capacity to invest significantly in our people, including in areas such as early learning, post-secondary education, and research, and infrastructure including housing, accessible and affordable internet, and greener, more affordable energy sources? Do you see any innovative opportunities for investment to reduce or eliminate territorial infrastructure gaps?


What does your party see as the Government of Canada's role in supporting the continued development of the NWT economy? What are your party's views on the role, and the importance, of resource extraction as a key feature of economic development? How important is diversification and community-based development?

If elected, how will your party address climate change impacts, particularly in NWT communities? What kind of funding and policy supports do you envision to address our adaptation and mitigation needs? Will you consider the impact of international climate change commitments on the NWT economy and high cost of living?

Reconciliation is a priority in our territory. If you form the next government, what will your party do to advance reconciliation? How will you work with NWT Indigenous governments and our public territorial government to advance the negotiation of land claims and self-government agreements? How will you support the implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples?

We look forward with great interest to seeing your response and will publish this letter and responses received on our website. If you have questions about the context of our territory before you respond, I would be happy to meet with you in the coming weeks.

Sincerely,

  
Caroline Cochrane  
Premier

c. Distribution List

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