

Summary of town-hall discussions

For clarity, and also to ensure the anonymity of participants, we have grouped the summary of discussions by themes.

Each point refers to comments that were made by constituents present at the meeting. Those are summary, not verbatim. They are not necessarily reflective of a consensus. Opposing views may be expressed.

The Economy

- Disappointment on the lack of emphasis of elected MLAs on the theme of economy during the 2023 electoral campaign.
- With the expected closure of diamond mines, the economic outlook is grim.
- The last Assembly did not take mine closures seriously.
- Addressing the economy ties in with strengthening social services; the resource sector should be consulted or involved in the housing strategy or the anti-poverty strategy.
- The GNWT needs to pay more attention to the work of NGOs.
- Regulation and certainty are the most important issues for the resource sector.
- There's been a population decline. It's tied to cost of living and the economic decline.

Housing

- Rent is expensive. There is no rent control in the NWT.
- Rent control seems like an easy fix but there are problems associated to it, such as not giving incentives to owners to invest in maintenance.
- Rent control can lead to further problems down the road.
- Operational costs for building owners have increased significantly.
- The problem is housing stock. Interest rates discourage housing investment/new construction.
- Yellowknife feels the pressure of the housing crisis in part because of people moving in form communities; investing in housing in communities will have positive repercussions for the capital too.
- The GNWT needs to take more of a leadership role in the review of community development plans.
- We need investment in social housing.

- How can we address the homelessness situation?

2023 wildfires

- Internal reviews are not enough. We need the review to be independent.
- Lack of independence of the review process is a real concern.
- Reviews need to be done as fast as possible while the memories of these events are still fresh.
- The issue is not just the evacuations. The many days of bad air quality leading to the evacuations and after the reopening also have a severe impact on the population, and it is worst for children. We had two months of darkness.
- A review should not just look at what happened with the evacuation in the South, but also at operations up North where allegedly there was confusion.

Tin Can Hill and the Polytechnic University

- We don't know yet what programs are going to be taught at the polytechnic and we are looking at building a campus. We're putting the cart before the horse.
- A downtown campus would make more sense. It would contribute to the revitalization of the downtown.
- We could repurpose empty buildings of the downtown, like the mall.
- A downtown campus is not the right option. We need a distinctive and appealing institution to attract students.
- Green spaces are important for residents.

Employment and the public service

- The government hires everybody making it hard for the private sector to compete as an employer.
- The public service is too big, it grows too fast.
- It's a highly over-staffed government.
- We should have renegotiated the collective agreement during the previous Assembly.
- We should take down any position that remains unstaffed for a year – at the exception of healthcare positions.

- In the NWT it takes longer to hire staff.
- Hiring is tough. As a private sector employer, we've had position advertised for 2 years.

Healthcare, mental health, addiction

- Mines offer addiction treatment [to their workers], but once they are out of the mine site there is no safety net.
- Is integrated care management still being implemented?

Public safety

- There is a lot of violence downtown. My daughter was threatened.

What MLA Reid said

A selection of remarks made by MLA Reid during the meeting:

Economy and the resources sector

- We need to hire more people locally in the resource sector.
- I will be sitting on the Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment. It is Committee's intention to invite members of industry to present, and to have more direct conversations with industry.

Housing

- There is a housing project that's happening in the Sahtu – to be announced – that is great. It could serve as a model for other regions.

Wildfires review

- MLAs are calling for an independent review of the 2023 wildfires response. I'm in favour of an independent review. So are most MLAs.

Addictions treatment

- Many options are being discussed regarding addiction treatment centres, including regional facilities. But the consensus is that after-care is paramount.
- In my experience, to take that first step towards treatment is a personal decision. My take is how can we make more people want to take that first step, to make it more accessible.

What to expect from this government?

- We've been told that the budget is tight, so we might not have a lot of wiggle room.

Tin Can Hill

- An environmental assessment of the proposed Yellowknife Polytechnic campus location is expected during this quarter. The decision to go ahead with a Tin Can Hill campus is dependent on the result of this assessment and the availability of federal funding. I cannot say where the conversation will go until we have the environmental assessment. I will update constituents when the environmental assessment is completed.

Meeting ends at 7:42 PM