

CAROLINE WAWZONEK – MLA CANDIDATE FOR YELLOWKNIFE SOUTH

Response to the Questionnaire from the NWT Status of Women

1. Barren Ground Caribou:

A number of factors are contributing to the decline of barren ground caribou populations across the north. One recovery action that could be championed by the GNWT is to approve a policy that protects caribou calving habitat from the negative impacts of human land use activities.

It would be necessary that the scope of this policy would oppose development on caribou calving grounds in all political jurisdictions because most NWT caribou herds are shared with other jurisdictions including most calving habitat. Although the GNWT has no mandate beyond our borders, the government makes recommendations to other jurisdictions (such as Alaska and Nunavut) in cases where environmental reviews and land use planning processes involve calving habitat of NWT caribou herds.

Would you support a GNWT policy that directs the territorial government to oppose the construction of infrastructure corridors (including roads) or any other industrial developments on caribou calving grounds?

Yes, I would support this:

No, I would not: No.

Comments:

As of July 1, 2019, all major development activities likely to result in significant disturbance or threat to wildlife or wildlife habitat are required to have a Wildlife Management and Monitoring Plan in place. My understanding is that these plans are outputs of a robust regulatory process designed to identify, assess and determine the manageability of impacts and mitigations and they should address concerns raised in the environmental assessment process. There is supposedly a recognition within the planning and assessment processes that smaller scale developments will not need to have as comprehensive a plan as a larger developments, but it is the process itself where the assessment of the potential impact occurs, where the mitigations necessary to protect the herd are explored and where consideration is given over whether a project should proceed or not.

The development of a Wildlife Management and Monitoring Plan is described by the GNWT's Department of Environment and Natural Resources as being a "best practice" for development projects in the NWT. It is still early days for the WMMP approach but I am hopeful, subject to hearing otherwise, that this will indeed be a best practice to mitigate human impacts on wildlife and wildlife habitat while still supporting timely opportunities for exploration and development.

The long-term prosperity of the NWT will require a balance between access for resource exploration and associated infrastructure development against the need to mitigate the effects of human impacts on wildlife and wildlife habitats. I believe in a balanced approach that uses best practices to off-set impacts from human activities. I cannot support a generalized policy position that would categorically shut down development opportunities in the NWT, let alone across the border in another jurisdiction.

2. Candidate Protected Areas:

Over the past two decades a number of NWT communities have identified lands and waters of significant cultural and ecological value for nomination as candidate protected areas. The GNWT now has a legislative tool to sponsor this work through the NWT Protected Areas Act which provides an opportunity for the GNWT to enter into innovative Nation to Nation partnerships for co-managing and governing protected areas. Two proposals - Ts'ude niline Tu'eyeta (Ramparts) and Dinàgà Wek'èhodi (North Arm) could be ready for establishment early in the upcoming 19th Assembly, others could move forward within the term.

If elected will you support the establishment of the previously nominated candidate protected areas?

Yes:

No: Not yet.

Comments:

I support Nation to Nation relationships and I support co-management of lands. I also support NWT-driven land use planning in general. However, I do not believe in making promises that lack a strong foundation of information and background. I am not sufficiently familiar with either the Ts'ude niline Tu'eyeta (Ramparts) or Dinàgà Wek'èhodì (North Arm) areas and do not know with confidence whether there are any other stakeholders or competing claims or interests in these areas therefore I cannot commit to support their establishment without that full picture.

3. Planning Ahead - Investing in Local Environmental Stewardship Capacity:

There are a number of innovative and exciting land based programs evolving in regions of the NWT, for example "Guardians" which have objectives related to environmental stewardship and could include training for participation in the many facets of land, water and resource management.

Do you support that the GNWT should have a focus on collaborating, promoting and contributing to proposals that bring new investment into innovative programs that increase the local capacity of Indigenous Governments and regional land and resource management departments?

Yes: Yes

No:

Comments:

I believe innovative land and resource management by Indigenous Governments or in partnership between the GNWT and Indigenous Governments is an area where the NWT can be a leader in Canada. I would support collaborating, promoting and contributing to proposals that increase the capacity of Indigenous Governments for regional land and resource management. I think this is an opportunity to showcase innovation in ways of promoting land use that is lead by Indigenous Governments. This kind of capacity building within Indigenous Governments is also building capacity to make best use of the benefits of resource development, which necessarily engages resource management.