

**Yukon Climate Action Network**  
**Questions for Whitehorse Mayor and Council Candidates**

October 2024

**Answers from Elleen Melnychuk**

**Question 0:** What is your name and what position are you running for in this municipal election?

**Elleen Melnychuk - Councillor**

**Question 1:** Please provide your level of agreement with the following statement:

"Municipalities should consider costs to the climate for all budget items being considered. This would mean inclusion of the following considerations for each budget item: Will it help reduce greenhouse gas emissions? Will it increase greenhouse gas emissions? If yes, efforts must be made to minimize GHG impacts."

**Strongly agree**

**Question 2:** The Council of Canadians Yukon Chapter has released a Climate Emergency Declaration, which has been endorsed by a number of businesses, organizations and individual residents. It can be found here: <https://www.cofcyukon.org/declaration> Would you commit to acting in alignment with the Declaration if you are elected?

**Absolutely, if elected I will comit to acting in alignment with the Declaration.**

**Question 3:** Is there a role for regional or municipal food policy to play in addressing the climate crisis and if so, what does it look like?

**Yes, municipal food policies can play a key role in addressing the climate crisis, especially here in the North where we see "Arctic Amplification," the impacts of climate change faster than elsewhere. While our food production industry falls under the responsibility of the Yukon government, the City should work with YG to develop a food policy to support local food production and support sustainable food production to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Working to ensure food security in the face of climate-related crisis would be a big step towards reducing the issue of food insecurity that Yukoners often face.**

**In particular, a food policy could support our growing farming sector, community gardens, and local agriculture and work towards reducing emissions from the transportation of food**

products to the Yukon! Additionally, an action-oriented food policy could help reduce food waste, which is a significant contributor to methane emissions in landfills.

I would be interested in advancing municipal food policies that could also focus on waste reduction by setting up composting programs, food rescue initiatives, and public awareness campaigns on reducing household food waste.

Developing a climate action food policy would be a long-term plan but the key is to start. Food security is a growing concern and aligning food production with climate goals could help our city reduce emissions and build a more resilient sustainable community to withstand the challenges of climate change.

**Question 4:** Please provide your level of agreement with the following statement: "As Whitehorse, "The Wilderness City", faces more wildfires, landslides, erosion and flooding, due to climate change, subsequently forcing hungry bears into urban areas, we must act. By becoming a Bear Smart Community, as in 18 other Bear Smart communities in BC and Alberta, which includes adopting better waste management practices and educating residents in affected communities, we can reduce human-bear conflicts, keep residents safe, and prevent the killing of bears drawn to our city center neighborhoods and the city's wilderness edges."

**I strongly agree. I have always had an affinity for our bear population. I am a member of Grizzly Bear Protection Yukon. I am committed to making Whitehorse a Bear Smart Community, which would include educating residents on better waste management practices as well as increasing the number of bear proof garbage containers in Whitehorse neighbourhoods to protect our citizens and our bears!**

**Question 5:** The City of Whitehorse is in the process of developing its Climate Action Plan. What work would you do as part of Whitehorse City Council to ensure its success? What actions related to climate mitigation or adaptation do you think deserve the highest priority?

**Absolutely, I believe the Whitehorse Climate Action Plan should set ambitious greenhouse gas reduction goals, backed by clear timelines. The urgency of the climate crisis demands action, and we need to be proactive in reducing emissions while also preparing for the impacts we're already facing. As part of my platform focuses on sustainability, I'm committed to prioritizing infrastructure projects that are climate-resilient and designed to reduce our carbon footprint. This means ensuring our roads, water systems, and public spaces are built for a future with more extreme weather, without increasing taxes for residents. One area of focus In addition, supporting local businesses as they adapt to new environmental standards is key. By creating incentives and opportunities for them to transition toward sustainable practices, we can reduce our city's emissions while growing our local economy. One opportunity the City could consider to advance its climate**

mitigation efforts would be to form a partnership with a First Nations' Development Corp. with a wind energy project, and then buy electricity from a wind farm to heat our buildings. Whitehorse has the opportunity to be a leader in addressing climate change at the municipal level, and I will work to make sure we take bold, measurable steps toward a more sustainable future.

**Question 6:** The City's draft climate action plan (see <https://www.engagewhitehorse.ca/climate-action-plan>, page 7) shows that Whitehorse emissions have only kept rising since the City declared a Climate Emergency in 2019. Furthermore, the science behind climate change indicates that change is happening faster than previously predicted. Do you believe that the Whitehorse Climate Action plan should commit to aggressive greenhouse gas reduction goals with clear timelines that reflect the increasing urgency of the climate crisis?

**Yes, the Whitehorse Climate Action Plan should commit to aggressive greenhouse gas reduction goals with clear timelines, in response to the face of faster-than-predicted climate impacts. The City should review the draft Climate Action Plan, revise and finalize the Plan based on current data in collaboration with our partners. The urgency of the climate crisis in the North, coupled with the city's continued rise in emissions since declaring a climate emergency in 2019, demands bold action. Current data indicates that despite our efforts, Whitehorse's emissions have increased due to factors such as reliance on fossil fuels for infrastructure like the Canada Games Centre, population growth, and increasing energy demands. The City could set short-term timelines to ensure that significant reduction emissions are realized by mid-century to meet the goals as laid out in the Action Plan of 2024-2050, and to achieve deadlines recommended by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). With the ongoing rise in emissions and faster-than-predicted climate impacts, clear targets with accountability measures in place are key to ensure the city's success in addressing our climate crisis. Committing to short-term GHG reduction targets, aligned with science-backed recommendations, could set Whitehorse apart as a Northern city leading in innovative climate solutions.**