

Iqaluit-Niaqunnguu voters get a pared-down three-way race: Candidates talk about child care, elder care, housing ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

In 2013, Iqaluit-Niaqunnguu voters had to choose from a crowded field of six candidates, but this Oct. 30, they'll see a pared-down three-way race.

The incumbent MLA, Pat Angnakak, will face political newcomer Franco Buscemi, as well as a previous challenger, Anne Crawford, who finished second in the last territorial election with 131 votes, 20 fewer than Angnakak's 151.

Iqaluit-Niaqunnguu takes in the satellite community of Apex and neighborhoods in southeast Iqaluit that stretch through Tundra Valley and Tundra Ridge.

With a growing number of young families and three schools in the riding, reliable childcare and education are a focus for all three candidates.

Anne Crawford, a lawyer and business person who has served on the Apex District Education Authority for many years, said it's by understanding the intricate legislative process that you get things done in the territory.

"Fundamentally all capital flows from the territorial government," she said.

"Being an MLA is hard and complicated work, to represent the riding well and to commit the hours to act as a voice for constituents. That's what I would like to do," said Crawford, who, according to her campaign slogan, has 30 years of experience serving Iqaluit in law, business, education and government.

Crawford wants the government to make better use of northern tax benefits so that more housing and travel benefits are accessible to Nunavummiut.

"We act like the airlines are our boss when we should be giving the direction and using resources so that people in Nunavut have better access to travel," she said.

As for local issues, she wants to advocate for better roads and water delivery in her constituency, which is highly reliant on the unpaved Apex Road.

As a 25-year member of the Pairijait Tigumiaqtukkut Society, she's also pushing to keep Nunavut elders who need long-term care within the territory.

Of all issues within the campaign, she said this one produces the most emotion.

Made-in-Nunavut elder care has been a priority for incumbent Pat Angnakak, who has championed the Sailivik Society proposal to build an 80-bed, long-term elder care facility in the city.

"It's becoming the new normal to send elders south," she said. "We need to stop that and we need to care for our people here at home."

She said she's running for office again because four years goes by too fast and she feels she still has a lot of work to do.

"I've proven in the House that I haven't been afraid to stand up and question the government," she said. "I don't think I'll stop any time soon because that's just who I am."

During her time as MLA, Angnakak was an advocate for transparency in government and spoke out against workplace bullying within the Government of Nunavut.

She has also produced action on nutrition funding for Nunavut schools through breakfast programs.

“Every school now gets \$10,000 dollars. Before, it was always left to the principals,” said Angnakak, who has lived in the North her entire life and is fluent in Inuktitut.

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[Franco] Buscemi said he has been prepping for the election over the last few years by working on boards and within community organizations so he can see up close the issues he wants to address as MLA.

He’s served as a member of the Iqaluit Housing Authority, chair of the Alianait Arts Festival and has worked with the Food First school nutrition program.

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Besides asking for standardized funding for a Nunavut-wide school breakfast program, Buscemi wants to have a junior kindergarten set up.

He said this would help decrease the demand for daycare spaces and increase literacy among Nunavut children.

Buscemi said he is also looking for in-home daycares to be properly licensed so that those facilities can access resources for childcare delivery, and so parents can be sure their kids are safe.

“Sometimes parents are forced to choose their employment or education over the safety of their children,” he said.

Increasing daycare spots, licensing options and resources for Iqalungmiut who are caring for other people’s children in their homes are also key planks in the platforms of Crawford and Angnakak.

-reprinted from Nunatsiaq Online

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