

# **2022-23 Annual Activities Report**

## **Annual General Meeting**

### **Alternatives North**

14 June 2023

#### **Living Wage**

Alternatives North hired economist Michel Haener to calculate the Living Wage for 4 NWT Communities. The communities were Yellowknife, Fort Smith, Hay River and Inuvik. Ms. Haener researched the data and provided us with draft documents in Feb. 2022. These were reviewed by Alternatives North members and comments were returned to the contractor. A final living wage document and infographics of the Living Wage were developed and released publicly on March 30th, 2022. This took place as a virtual session on Zoom. The event was advertised by a press release, on Facebook and by email. A mailing of the Living Wage document and a plain language version were sent to various governments in the four communities and to NGOs interested in poverty reduction prior to the virtual session. The mailing included a poster of the upcoming virtual release. The plain language version was completed by the NWT Literacy Council. Michel Haener and Suzette Montreuil did interviews about the Living Wage release in CBC, and stories were written in NNSL and Cabin Radio as well.

We also discussed the possibility of doing a living wage for the smaller communities with the contractor. For the smaller communities, it was not possible to calculate a living wage using the Canadian Living Wage Framework as there is not market housing available. An attempt was made to determine what reasonable wages would be for smaller communities using the poverty indicators and cost of living data that are available. Alternatives North reviewed draft versions of the document. A final copy was finished in March 2022. Copies of this report were mailed to the hamlets/bands in all of the smaller communities. The virtual release of this information took place on April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022. A poster of the virtual release was sent out with the mailing of the report.

#### **Basic Income Guarantee**

Alternatives North, with the assistance of a work team from the Basic Income Canada Network (BICN), organized a consultation process looking into the concept of a basic income guarantee (BIG), with a view to exploring the feasibility of implementing a pilot BIG project in the Northwest Territories. This included contacting regional Indigenous leaders, community governments, NGOs with an interest in reducing poverty and helping NWT residents in low income situations, and NWT MLAs. The campaign included

outreach and an online session on Feb 15th, 2023 with 41 participants from across the NWT and other areas of Canada. A press release with information about the event was sent out with the following invitation:

“Alternatives North is inviting community leaders and the general public to a virtual public Forum on Wednesday, February 15 from 1:30-3:30pm MST. The Forum will feature speakers and community discussion about what a Basic Income Guarantee could look like in the NWT. The event is free and open to the public - registration is required.”

Copies of the final reports were sent to the workshop participants, Indigenous and Community leadership, relevant NGOs and MLAs. The titles of the reports were “Basic Income Guarantee for the NWT Report, Summary Report for Policy Makers” and “Community Summary Report.” Copies of the reports were sent to the GNWT Anti-Poverty office. The reports contain an overview of prior pilot projects in Canada using a basic income guarantee. Within the context of a large land mass with a manageable population size, the reports outline why the NWT is a good location for a BIG pilot project. They also look at services that could be provided instead of administering and monitoring people who are receiving income support, and outline some of the possible socioeconomic outcomes that could arise from receiving a Basic Income Guarantee. There was a public event to release the reports and answer the questions of media representatives. It was held on April 12th, 2023. The cost for this part of the project came from our other contributors. Work included a review of tools such as the Northern Market Basket Measure and regional living allowances.

We were unable to explore the optimal payment to be provided by a basic income guarantee as this aspect required more time and financial resources to engage further expertise, especially that of specialized economists with additional costs. An application to complete this essential next step has been submitted to the Anti-poverty office for the year 2023-24. A series of recommendations were developed for each of the reports. These provide an outline of how to continue to assess the need for implementing a Basic Income Guarantee in the NWT.

## **NWT Energy Directions**

In January 2023 we submitted a letter to GNWT commenting on the report "Energy Initiatives Report 2021-2022 <https://alternativesnorth.ca/public-policy-2/> urging a stronger greenhouse gas emission reduction goal and more effective actions to achieve it.

## **Downtown Yellowknife Biomass District Heating Study**

Continuing its work in identifying cost-effective GHG reductions in the NWT, Alternatives North secured funding in 2021 to assess the economic feasibility of a District Heating system for Yellowknife’s downtown core, fueled by Wood Pellets. The study assessed the economics under both for-profit, and non-profit, ownership models to help understand the potential GHG impacts and who would be most suitable to develop such a project. To complete the study, AN partnered with the City of Yellowknife and Arctic Energy Alliance and engaged with potential customers to ensure the results have a high level of confidence for potential developers.

The results indicate a strong business case for both ownership models while providing 10% annual heating savings to customers and reducing GHG emissions by 13-16 kt CO2e. Overall project cost would be between \$72-85M.

	<b>For-Profit</b>	<b>Non- Profit</b>
<b>Capital Cost</b>	\$72 million	\$85 million
<b>Project Return</b>	8%	20%
<b>Annual GHG reduction (CO2e)</b>	13.1 kt	16.1 kt

In addition, two potential expansions to a downtown district energy system were investigated. Both would further strengthen the business case of a district heating utility while further reducing emissions an additional 4.3-6 kt per year.

Since releasing this report publicly, Alternative North has spoken with local media as well as interested developers. While the analysis is complete, Alternatives North will continue to support the concept by advocating for further development and assisting any interested parties.

## **AN Participation in GNWT Post-Devolution Resource Management Legislation**

### ***Background***

We continue to follow-up on regulations and legislation related to resource management in the post-devolution environment. During the last Assembly, AN participated in the development and review of several resource management bills put forward by GNWT as part of its efforts to finally review the federal regime we inherited. They were:

- *Protected Areas Act* (passed August 2019)
- *Environmental Rights Act* (passed August 2019)

- *Mineral Resources Act* (passed August 2019; regulations in development)
- *Public Land Act* (passed August 2019; regulations in development)
- *Forest Act* (introduced into last Assembly, reintroduced in 2023)
- *Petroleum Resources Act* (passed August 2019)
- *Oil and Gas Operation Act* (passed August 2019)
- *Waters Act* (not introduced)
- *Environmental Protection Act* (not introduced)

Indigenous Government Organizations are co-drafting all legislation and regulations before they are introduced to the Assembly. This is through the Legislative Development Protocol developed and adopted in December 2020 by the Intergovernmental Council (IGC), following from the devolution agreement. Not only is this a new process, but the protocol is the first agreement of its kind in Canada. Hence, there have been many delays in legislation and regulations development.

### ***Public Land Act***

The *Public Land Act* is not in force until regulations have been updated. Public engagement for the regulations on the *Public Land Act* began in December 2020. As part of that, we wrote the Department of Lands last fiscal year with questions, and received a reply late May 2021.

Lands set up a Technical Advisory Panel to help with the development of the regulations. Though that was set up in 2021, there have been no meetings of the TAP as of March 31, 2023. Emerald Murphy, lawyer (formerly of NWT), is representing Alternatives North, Ecology North, and CPAWS-NWT on the panel.

Note that in May 2023 the TAP started. This will be reported in next year's annual report.

In October 2022, we took part in an engagement session with Lands staff and Ernest and Young on Surety Bonds. This was related to the use of surety bonds (rather than irrevocable letters of credit) for ensuring securities for restoration of mining operations. The change from ILC's to surety bonds was at the request of the mining

industry. We have not seen a report from the GNWTs engagement on this matter.

## **Mineral Resources Act**

The *Mineral Resources Act* is also not in force until regulations have been updated. The IGC is developing several sets of regulations; namely:

- General (dealing with tenure, land acquisition, map staking etc.)
- **Royalty**
- NWT Benefits (for NWT residents)
- Benefit Agreements (for Indigenous Organizations)
- Mineral Rights Review Board

Regulations on Coal and Dredging are also expected, but not under this first set of regulations.

In April, 2022, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment (ITI) began their public consultations on the above regulations, except for royalties, with a presentation (open to the public) to the Standing Committee on Economic Development and the Environment. On June 22, AN hosted a public presentation by ITI on those regulations. The presentation included:

### Purpose of MRA

- Background and Understanding Industry Changes and Transition of Acts
- Merit based tenure
- Understanding
  - how the work system works
  - Zones
  - Temporary Restricted Areas
  - Confidentiality
  - Ground staking to Map Staking

- Timeline schematic

In November 2022, we sent a letter to the ITI Minister expressing concerns that environmental baseline studies were no longer to be intended to be included as “work” under the new regulations, and requesting a meeting.

In December, 2022, we met with Minister Wawzonek and staff regarding this, and other aspects of the proposed regulations. One concern was that there had been no public information about Socio-economic Agreements (not in June presentation, and not on their website), so it would be difficult to comment on that section. Along with discussion on the various regulations, we expressed dismay at the process. For instance, staff said at the June presentation that they couldn’t share a lot of information about certain items because it was with IGC, even through the regulations have been in development for at least three years. Lack of public input during this

time is unhelpful in the long term. We followed up with a letter on process (see *Post-Devolution Resource Management Legislation Process* below).

In January 2023, ITI presented information on the Socio-Economic Agreement section of the regulations (i.e., NWT benefits, not private benefit agreements with IGOs).

After that, we made a submission to ITI on the regulations in combination with Ecology North and Mining Watch Canada (<https://alternativesnorth.ca/mining-2/> )

Regarding royalties: we hosted a presentation by the ITI on the Royalty Regulations in May 2022. From that presentation, we did a submission to ITI, and developed a public mailout on royalties (<https://alternativesnorth.ca/mining-2/> ). The mailout went to all households in the NWT, encouraging people to submit feedback to the GNWT on this topic. We felt that there was not enough understandable information available to the public, and this was a way to encourage more public involvement. We got feedback in three ways:

1. A poison pen letter by Chamber of Mines, written in response to our mailout, was sent to ITI and to Yellowknife/NewsNorth. The newspaper gave us the opportunity to put in a similar length letter for publications, which we did.
2. CBC North interviewed Karen Hamre; short clips were on radio and TV.
3. One citizen copied us on their submission to GNWT, saying they agreed with our mailout.

## **Forest Act**

For years AN asked Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) staff when there would be public engagement on this revised act. The answer was repeatedly “in six months or so”. Finally in December the Forest Act Summary of Policy Intentions were sent out for public comment. We asked for a presentation of this, and received on December 21, 2022. We submitted comments on December 26, 2022 <https://alternativesnorth.ca/regulatory-affairs-2/>

We commented on principles, definitions, roles and responsibilities, Forest Ecosystem Monitoring Plans, and the process. We followed up on the process per letter outlined below.

The Act was introduced in the house in February 2023. We anticipate working with other NGOs on a submission to the Act.

## **Post-Devolution Resource Management Legislation Process**

As noted above, we have had concerns with the process all the department took, and are taking, in developing post-devolution resource management legislation. In February 2023, we sent a joint letter to ITI Minister Wawzonek, and Lands Minister

Thompson, and ENR Minister Thompson. While expressing appreciation for the Intergovernmental Council Legislative Development Protocol, we also express concerns over the lack of public engagement. We believe the process should be tripartite, not bipartite. We have not received any letter of acknowledgement, nor any attempt by the departments to engage on this issue.

## **Responsible Legislation Website**

Various non-government organizations, including Ecology North, Nature United, and Alternatives North, have been collaborating on a ‘responsibilelegislationnwt.ca’ website. The site is to track NWT and federal environmental and land/resource development legislation that is new or being revised. It is meant as a public tool to provide an accessible way for NWT residents and others to understand and input into the legislation and related regulations or policy.

Unfortunately, this project is fully outside of our hands to influence the timeline, and though we are assured that it will be ‘soon’, it will not be useful in the current Assembly. An opportunity missed.

## **Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board Draft Land Use Closure Cost Estimator Policy**

Comments made by Alternatives North on March 27, 2023:

1. **Definitions:** Estimator definition “An EXCEL spreadsheet for calculating closure and reclamation cost for projects that require a land use permit” is not clear that post-closure is included. That is listed later, but to make it clear that it is considered throughout.

**Recommendation:** change to include post-closure. Same for “RECLAIM” definition

2. **Definitions:** Engagement “The communication and outreach activities an applicant, licensee, or permittee undertakes with affected parties prior to and during the operation of a project.” An operator could potentially argue that “operation” includes only production-type phase of a project. It must be clear that engagement is needed in closure, reclamation and post-closure.

**Recommendation:** Either change this definition, or add a definition of “operation” that is very inclusive.

3. Exemptions for community governments:

**Recommendation:** Option 3, i.e., community governments are exempt except as recommended by landowner. This gives reasonable exemption for

community governments, but some assurance that if they are doing something of concern to the landowner, security can be required.

4. **Exemptions for conducting work on traditional lands:** issue is that work could potentially affect other lands and waters (not just the private lands).  
**Recommendation:** When work could potentially affect lands and waters other than the private lands, security could be required.
5. **Section 5.2.3, post-closure.** Unclear as to why water monitoring would not be included as an example. For instance, tailing ponds should be monitored for leaks, which would be a water monitoring situation.