



Alternatives North

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January 16, 2024

Honourable Caitlin Cleveland
Minister, Industry, Tourism and Investment
Government of the NWT
Box 1320
Yellowknife NT X1A 2L9
by e-mail: Caitlyn_Cleveland@gov.nt.ca

Minister Cleveland:

The *Mineral Resources Act* (MRA), passed at the very end of the 18th Assembly, was drafted as 'enabling legislation'. Thus, much of its details and power rests in the regulations.

We ask that you improve how the MRA regulations are developed during your mandate.

Stakeholder (which includes the public) involvement in the development of regulations is not as clear as it is in the development of legislation. We ask that you ensure the involvement of all stakeholders in developing the MRA regulations, to be in line with the GNWT commitments in the Open Government Policy. We suggest that the development process be workshopped with broader stakeholder involvement, in co-ordination with the necessary co-drafting process with Indigenous governments.

Alternatives North, as noted in our presentation at the NGO/MLA meeting on December 13th, is a public interest group interested in social, environmental, and economic justice. We have a history of working on many aspects of the mineral resource industry. Funding for stakeholder groups such as ourselves is needed since volunteers and unfunded projects cannot be relied on for the level of engagement on many of the technical and policy issues at stake.

A specific request is that **environmental baseline studies** be included as part of the definition of work in the current regulations. This is the definition from the old act (still in force).

"Environmental baseline studies" means a description of selected environmental attributes that existed before mineral exploration or mining development and that are used to establish a benchmark from which to measure changes to the environment. Selected environmental attributes include meteorologic, hydrologic and hydro-geologic attributes, surface water and groundwater quality, aquatic resources, soil profiling, ecosystems, wildlife and wildlife habitat, cultural heritage and archaeology."

We would like an updated version of this clause in the new regulations.

Getting long-term environmental baseline work is critical for mitigating the environmental effects of mining operations, and for developing and implementing appropriate closure plans and post-closure procedures. This information will also help inspectors in understanding what activities may be detrimentally affecting the environment, because such environmental baseline studies are longer-term than studies required for mine openings. Including environmental baseline studies in the definition of work will encourage the important site-related studies needed for all these measures.

We request that you provide us, and make public, a detailed public engagement plan for the remainder of the MRA regulations development. This should include a list of topics to be covered, public engagement opportunities (including multi-stakeholder events), and a schedule.

We remain able and willing to provide constructive and meaningful input into the MRA regulations when you provide such opportunities moving forward. We would be pleased to meet with you and your staff on this topic to help improve public engagement in the development of the regulations and more transparency and accountability in their implementation.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Hamre". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small flourish at the end.

Karen Hamre
For Alternatives North