Alternatives North

Activities Report

2024-25 Annual General Meeting

Below is a synopsis of some of the major activities Alternatives North (AN) involved itself in over the 2024-25 fiscal year.

Basic Income Guarantee [Ben]

After a number of false starts and difficulties AN was able to publish another in its series of analyses of the potential a guaranteed income would offer to northerners. The writing of the report was admirably handled by PlanIt North who came to the project late after another consultant withdrew his services for personal reasons. The report describes how a guaranteed income might fit with other programs and services available in the NWT. It also estimates its potential total net cost although further financial work would have to be done by the government before implementation. Mary McCreadie, an expert in plain language writing, produced a shorter, less technical summary of the paper that was given wider distribution. Major funding for the study was provided through the GNWT Anti-Poverty Fund, augmented by support from the PSAC Social Justice Fund and the Catholic Diocese of the Mackenzie.

Suzette Montreuil, Kevin O’Reilly, Bob Wilson and Ben McDonald formed the working committee for this project. This group had the opportunity to meet with MLAs Shauna Morgan, Kate Reid and Julian Morse to discuss opportunities for advancing the idea in the NWT.

Another component of AN’s guaranteed income work involved Karl Widerquist, an internationally known author and expert on guaranteed incomes who visited Yellowknife during the year. AN arranged media exposure for him and a presentation to the GNWT SCEDE committee.

Investigation of Solar Displacing Diesel Consumption / Emissions in the North Slave Grid [Bob B]

In April 2024 Bob Bromley developed a 10 MW solar farm concept to displace as much diesel-generated electricity with renewable energy as possible in the North Slave Grid.  The project was then discussed with the Yellowknives Dene, the Tlicho, and the North Slave Metis Alliance.  CanNor was approached for the possibility of funding - they encouraged us to continue developing the idea and indicated that a letter of support from the Northwest Territories Power Corporation (NTPC) would be essential for funding consideration.

Andrew Robinson and Lachlan Maclean further developed the concept by conducting a high level RETSCREEN analysis, which indicated good potential for economic feasibility and significant reduction in diesel consumption and emissions from the grid.

We then sought costing information, and High Latitude Energy Consulting produced a document entitled *Proposal: A 10 MW Solar Feasibility Study for NTPC’s Snare Hydro Power Grid*.  With the above information and documents in hand, we approached NTPC to determine their interest.  Mr. Alex Love of NTPC agreed to consider the project, and subsequently NT Energy (Alex Love moved from NTPC to NT Energy), in collaboration with AN, contracted a feasibility study of the project with Yukon Energy Innovation (YEI).  *Feasibility Study for NT Energy Solar Potential* was published on 28 February.  It examined 5 MW solar fields for both the South Slave and North Slave grids, indicating again that at a high level the projects were clearly feasible.

AN provided feedback to NT Energy on YEI’s report, and next steps are being considered.

Review of GNWT’s Climate Change Action Plan 2025-2029 [Bob B]

In October and November, AN developed a position on GNWT’s draft climate action plan.  Substantial input and discussions led to a final document and on 27 November, 2024 we submitted *Alternatives North Comments on 2025-2029 Draft Climate Change Action Plan***,** with copies sent to the ministers of finance, economic development, environment and infrastructure.

City Of Yellowknife Climate Action Plan [Karen]

The City of Yellowknife contracted Stantec to develop a community Climate Action Plan (CAP). This included engaging with “interested parties”, First Nations, and the public. In anticipation of an engagement session in February, AN went together with Ecology North to prepare a set of question for the consultants and City. Unfortunately, none of the questions were answered. We attended an on-line engagement session with several other groups. It didn’t allow for much back and forth for information and ideas. In March we submitted a joint recommendation paper based on the questions. The submission was in three sections:

* Governance and Communications Recommendations;
* Reducing GHG Emissions; and
* Adapting to a Changing Climate and Preparing for Unprecedented Events

The full submission is posted on the AN website: <https://alternativesnorth.ca/2025/03/21/an-comments-on-city-of-yellowknife-climate-change-action-plan/> .

The City has said there would be additional engagement; we expect to be involved in the ongoing plan development and implementation.

District Heating in Yellowknife [Lachlan]

Denedeh Investments Inc. has received a federal grant to develop a business plan for a project inspired by AN. AN supported this effort by contacting participants in the earlier AN study and requesting permission to share contact info with DII, as well as sharing data.  Under the terms of AN's Expression of Interest form, data collected can be shared with potential developers.

Submission to Special Committee on Education [Bruce]

In response to a call put out by the Standing Committee on Government Operations  studying the Government of the Northwest Territories’ proposed Indigenous Employment Policy, slated to be implemented on April 1, 2025, AN made a submission.

Initiated by Bruce Valpy, a group discussion concluded there was a direct connection between the failed Affirmative Action policy of the GNWT and historical education results in the community schools where the vast majority of students are Dene, Metis and Inuvialuit, the targets of the policy. AN compiled a number of questions regarding education outcomes - graduation statistics, attendance rates, Indigenous teachers, etc. - with the intent of establishing baseline education data upon which to craft future education policy.  Bruce and Bob Bromley drafted a letter on behalf of AN, and once approved, submitted the questions to the standing committee on February 9, 2025.  The committee acknowledged the submission.

Website Upgrade [Bruce]

Kyle Thomas of With Media was engaged to upgrade the [www.alternativesnorth.ca](http://www.alternativesnorth.ca/) website at a cost of $5,000. Karen LeGresley Hamre and Bruce Valpy supervised the contract which was completed in July 2024. The site is up and running and is now part of AN's communication platform for its written products, regular activities and other matters of interest.

Giant Mine Earth Week Event Communicating with Future Generations [Karen]

QRA report (Woods, 2020):  “Institutional controls fail over time as memory fades, leading to unforeseen and unintended use of the former mine site, resulting in greater contaminant exposure than predicted.”

“Site Wide Objective 4 (SW4) requires that residual risks are identified and local residents have been, and continue to be, informed of residual hazards (post‐remediation). This includes public communication initiatives, a land map with residual risks identified, and public engagement/communication initiatives.”

We need to communicate the hazards and lessons of Giant Mine now, to be able to continue to inform people in the future.  As a step towards this, AN hosted an evening of presentations as part of Ecology North’s Earth Week in April 2024.  Ecology North advertised the event as part of their full slate of events, and AN also put ads in the Yellowknifer and on Cabin Radio.

The idea was to show several different ways of approaching the stories of Giant Mine, adding to our understanding.

Bob Wilson’s photographs of the site were displayed.  After the event, they were given to GMOB to be part of their archives.

The event started with a showing of the film *Guardians of Eternity*.  France Benoit, the film’s director, and Mary Rose Sundeberg, who was interviewed in the film, were in attendance as part of the panel.

Ryan Silke, a local historian and member of the Yellowknife Historical Society, spoke about the development of the display about Giant Mine at the Yellowknife Museum.

Ben Nind, Executive Director of the Giant Mine Oversight Board described the history of the Board, its archives and other information about the mine, and its research mandate.

Tim Edwards, a graduate of the Landscape Architecture program at the University of Guelph, presented his final university project about stories the land tells.  His project boards were up around the room.  He also talked about the ideas behind his project in a slide presentation.

After the presentations, there was a panel discussion, where the audience asked questions about the various story-telling methods and projects.

About 35 members of the public attended, and discussion was varied and lengthy.  It was decided that this was a worthwhile way of communicating about Giant Mine.

We decided to try to concentrate on poetry as a way of telling the story and remembering for the next event.  Karen held discussions with Robyn Scott, President of NorthWords, Laurie Sarkadi, author, and Hannah Ascough, Ecology North’s lead on Earth Week, about how to approach this.  That led to a workshop, led by Ben Nind, at the end of October 2024.  Though of interest to the attendees, no poems were produced.  Robyn had intended to host poetry writing workshops in January, but after postponements, decided she could not take this on.  Laurie was approached to see if she could undertake a short story or similar writing workshop.  After consideration, she decided against doing it in time for the April 2025 Earth Week, but is interested in possibly doing so for the fall of 2025.

March was occupied by setting up a range of speakers and topics for the April 2025 Earth Week event.

Giant Mine Perpetual Warning:  Landscape Project [Karen]

The Earth Week event showed there was interest in Tim Edwards’ look at involving the community in how we interact with the landscape at Giant post-remediation.  He updated his university project with additional and new information from the project team, added more details in his design, and developed high-level costing information.  He met once with representatives of North Slave Métis Alliance and once with a representative from YK Déne First Nation.  Both were interested in the project, but no additional meetings were obtained. The intent is to continue to develop the ideas with more input from YKDFN, NSMA and the community at large.

Tim has a report, *In Touch With The Land: Exploring Opportunities for Landscape Design at the Post-Remediation Giant Mine Site*. It can be found at:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZcRcYLR_NBuWvayROC0I2oiDKJt8ILU0/view?usp=drive_link>

# Giant Mine Climate Change Economics  Landscape Project [Karen]

Michael Nabert has been working on a terms of reference for work to assess the economic vulnerabilities of the Giant Mine Remediation Project to climate change. The concept is to assess the economic vulnerabilities to the project to make it more robust and less expensive in the long term. The project proponents have a post-remediation budget. However, it lacks details needed for transparency, but also the details regarding vulnerabilities related to climate change and its potential cost implications. The overall intent of the analysis is to ensure long-term financial and environmental stability by better identifying and mitigating financial risks.

The draft summary of work is:

1. Create a 25 year draft post-remediation budget for the Giant Mine Remediation Project (GMRP, or project), with comments to the 100 year time frame
2. Compile expert views and research on how climate changes are forecast to impact the GMRP’s long term budget expectations
3. Conduct an economic risk assessment to identify potential costs not already reflected in the budget (with the focus being on climate-related risks, both direct and indirect)
4. Revise the budget to incorporate financial risks associated with climate change and identify any budget items that may be vulnerable to climate factors
5. Provide recommendations for improving our understanding and mitigation of climate related economic vulnerabilities (next steps)

The draft terms of reference has gone to members of GMOB. The intent is to fine a consultant team to undertake the work in the upcoming fiscal year.

Relations with Government

Throughout the year AN tried to keep a watchful eye on the workings of the GNWT by writing letters and papers and by participating in available consultation processes. Here is a listing:

* Environmental Audit - Karen participated in consultations
* Mining Regulations - Karen participated in consultations
* Home Insurance - Kevin sent an email on this topic to MLA Sheryl Yakeleya who raised the issue in the House
* Regional Study - Kevin wrote a letter to MLA Shauna Morgan
* Heritage Fund Act Review - Kevin prepared a [submission](https://alternativesnorth.ca/2025/02/19/alternatives-north-proposes-changes-to-nwt-heritage-fund/) for Alternatives North for the Standing Committee on Government Operations on the NWT Heritage Fund. [Kevin presented before the Committee in February 2025](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FUy1bYAUhEg) and the submission was well received.
* Kevin and Karen attended a meeting about the Northern Participant Funding Program and the Northern Regulatoray Initiative on May 31, 2024. Following on this workshop, Alternatives North developed an outline of a potential public critical minerals orientation workshop. After several emails, calls and meetings, it was determined that NGOs are not eligible for funding under the Northern Regulatory Initiative
* Campus Closure - Nancy drafted a letter to the College Board
* Burgundy Mines asked the GNWT for regulatory or other relief while threatening closure. It appeared that they might have had prior access to the new Regulations. Kevin prepared and sent a [letter to the Yellowknife regular MLAs](https://alternativesnorth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/AN-Letter-to-Yellowknife-Regular-MLAs-on-Diamond-Mine-Public-Subsidies-final.pdf) and sent some potential questions that friendly Yellowknife MLA’s could ask about the issues involved. Kevin was interviewed about the issue on CBC Trailbreaker. The news release and letter were posted to the AN web site and on Facebook. Kevin also helped Cabin Radio with their posting of the original Burgundy letter that had been dropped from the Wek’eezhii Land and Water Board public registry.
* A [submission to Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment](https://alternativesnorth.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/AN-Letter-to-SCEDE-on-Regulatory-Review-Sept.-27-2024.pdf) on its so-called Regulatory Review was prepared and submitted by Kevin on behalf of Alternatives North in September 2024.
* Gordon Hamre and Kevin worked with a Wall Street Journal reporter pursuing a story about Giant for a story to be printed in May.
* Kevin and Michael Nabert participated in a Giant Mine Perpetual Care workshop with the consultant EMR hired to produce a plan.
* GNWT Climate Change Plan - Bob B prepared a submission that was copied to the MLAs, the Department of Finance and Infrastructure and to Committees.
* Energy Scoping - Kevin submitted a paper.