



Alternatives North

11 February 2016

The Honourable Robert C. McLeod
Minister of Finance
Government of the NWT

DELIVERED ELECTRONICALLY

Dear Minister McLeod:

Alternatives North has recently learned of the innovative approach to budget consultation that the province of Newfoundland and Labrador undertook. As with the NWT, Newfoundland and Labrador has a resource-rich economy that is now struggling for a variety of reasons, including the drop in commodity prices. Given their difficult economic situation, that government thought it wise to consult their residents prior to determining a course of action. (See <http://gov.nl.ca/ourfiscalfuture/index.html>)

The mandate of their process was to:

- Identify a combination of measures to increase revenues and reduce expenditures;
- Eliminate waste and identify opportunities to do things better and more efficiently;
- Assess the role of government in the provision of public services; and
- Establish multi-year fiscal targets.

The process offered several ways for citizens to participate. These included:

- A discussion document outlining the government's fiscal situation;
- Regionally-based public discussion sessions led by the Office of Public Engagement;
- Open public town hall meetings;
- A guide for community groups, local governments, stakeholders and others on how to host their own conversations; and
- The ability to make submissions online or by email.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians were asked to reflect on three questions to help shape solutions to the difficult fiscal and economic reality facing the province:

1. Thinking of all of the things government spends your money on to provide the residents of the province with services, what are three things that could be stopped in order to save money?

2. Given the financial challenges facing our province, what three things do you think government could do to raise money (increase revenue)?
3. How can government be more innovative or efficient to provide quality services at lower costs?

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador recognized that theirs is not a temporary situation, but rather one that could last for years and thus deserves a serious review and redirection. The same is true for the NWT. We recognize with the recent election, such a process would have to be shortened in the NWT for the budget to be debated later this spring. However, the GNWT should seriously consider initiating a budget consultation similar to that undertaken by Newfoundland and Labrador, to inform the GNWT's 2016/17 budget. Such an undertaking recognizes that any changes to our economic situation should be well understood by the public, and more importantly, that the public should have the chance to help shape the decisions that are made and the direction that is taken. We look forward to your response.

Yours truly,



Ben McDonald
For Alternatives North

cc. Cabinet Ministers
All Regular MLAs