



Alternatives North

September 27, 2021

Subject: Submission to the City of Yellowknife to inform the City's Budget 2022 and its financial plan for the next three years

The ongoing COVID-19 crisis has increased social and economic inequalities, making vulnerable Yellowknifers even more vulnerable. The ecological crisis creates eco-anxiety in many of our youth, and is damaging our way of life and our health. More than ever, we need a budget that builds a hopeful, inclusive and just future.

This is why Alternatives North has identified the two following priorities for the upcoming budget cycle:

1. **Address the ecological and climate crisis.** Despite the climate crisis that is threatening the health and well-being of Yellowknifers and their children, the City of Yellowknife is one of the few cities in Canada without a climate plan. The City of Yellowknife should adopt an integrated climate plan that builds on, and strengthens existing plans and strategies as well as developing new measures.

Alternative North is asking that this budget provide adequate and sustained financial and human resources to:

- **Quickly develop, implement, monitor and report on an ambitious climate plan with mitigation and adaptation measures** that significantly reduces carbon emissions AND protects Yellowknifers against the harmful impacts of climate change.
- **Report on, update, and fund the *Corporate and Community Energy Action Plan*, including a biomass district heating located downtown.** The City needs to move at a faster pace and emulate best practices of other cities in the North¹. It should reduce emissions in buildings (e.g. space and water heating) and in transportation – including taking advantage of the clean electricity grid.² More specifically, investment in active

¹ This article presents the strategy of the City of Whitehorse,

<https://www.nationalobserver.com/2021/09/07/whitehorse-battery-storage-unplug-from-diesel>

² Electricity is not a high priority since most of Yellowknife's power comes from hydroelectricity.

- modes of transportation (cycling and walking) and transit should be increased to implement measures in the 2020 Community Plan³.
- **Fully implement *GROW*, the *Yellowknife Food and Agriculture Strategy*.** The expansion of local food production to meet a large part of the food security needs of Yellowknife residents is an achievable goal. It is also a strategy that reduces carbon emissions and increases resiliency. It is critical to see incentives and support for the commercial production aspects of the Strategy. Local food production for commercial purposes must be encouraged in all residential and industrial areas of the city. Economic development opportunities for Yellowknife residents and sustainable practices must be supported and incentivized.
 - **Meaningfully empower Yellowknife residents and businesses to individually and collectively reduce our environmental footprint, including carbon emissions.** The City cannot implement a climate plan on its own. Investing in meaningful and impactful public education and engagement of Yellowknife residents and businesses will be crucial to implement collective action. This could include looking at how to ban the use of single use plastic items in businesses (as done in other municipalities in Canada), strategies to reduce production of plastic⁴, and incentives to develop short supply chain and circular models,

To be ambitious, the City of Yellowknife's climate plan should:

- **Integrate other key documents and strategy**, such as the 2020 Community Plan and the Community Economic Development. This will ensure consistency and create synergies in resources among the City's existing policies and initiatives;
 - **Include actions to reduce scope 3 emissions (or "imported emissions")** by promoting local and circular economy, for example, with local food production, and makerspace to fix broken appliances;
 - **Set up accountability mechanisms to monitor and annually report on progress.** The climate plan should include clear priorities, timelines and indicators to report on, and outline the responsibilities of each department. The implementation of the plan needs to be a key priority for the City Administrator and progress regularly reviewed at the Governance and Priorities Committee.
2. **Address the ongoing housing crisis with decent, affordable housing.** Yellowknife is facing a severe affordable housing shortage along with poor condition housing stock that are often owned and managed by a few for-profit companies.⁵ The new zoning by-law that allows a greater variety of structures is a good example of changes that need to be

³ See section 5.2.2. And 5.3.3.

⁴ This will also divert sending plastic into the City's landfill given there is no recycling options available.

⁵ CBCnews, Aug 20, 2021, <https://newsinteractives.cbc.ca/longform/landlords-game-living-with-northview>,

made. The city needs to further allocate adequate and sustained financial, policy and human resources to:

- Build a fiscal and regulatory environment that supports the long-term development of a diverse supply of housing types⁶ that would be locally-owned; and
- Invest in financial resources to create incentives and partnerships that will lead to the development of affordable non-market housing.

With the adoption of an ambitious climate plan and audacious measures to provide for decent and affordable housing, the City of Yellowknife has the opportunity to invest in an inspiring future for Yellowknifer residents and businesses.

Alternatives North is a social justice coalition operating in the Northwest Territories. Within our ranks are representatives of churches, labour unions, environmental organizations, women and family advocates and anti-poverty groups. Individual citizens are important participants in our work.

Aïda Nciri, on behalf of Alternatives North.



⁶ See examples of policies and regulations here:

www.auma.ca/advocacy-services/programs-initiatives/housing-hub/how-municipalities-can-act/strategies-support-housing-using-affordability