



# *Alternatives North*

## **DELIVERED ELECTRONICALLY**

Honourable Caroline Cochrane  
Premier  
Government of the Northwest Territories

3 January, 2023

Dear Premier Cochrane:

### **RE: Energy Initiatives Report 2021-2022**

Alternatives North has reviewed this report, and would like to provide our comments for consideration. Alternatives North is a Territorial social and environmental justice coalition based in Yellowknife. Members include churches, labour unions, environmental organizations, women and family advocates, anti-poverty groups as well as individuals with an interest in our work. We have consistently participated in climate change planning and actions of GNWT over the past decade and more.

We find the 2021-2022 Energy Initiatives Report is still focused on trying to accomplish the inadequate Energy Strategy goal of 30% Green House Gas (GHG) reduction by 2030. The Paris Agreement sets 50% by 2030 as the necessary target to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, and the Canadian target is a 40-45% reduction. Climate Change is a global problem requiring global action, and NWT residents and businesses want to do their fair share in addressing this emergency.

In addition, the report does not clearly show current performance against plan or target. Without this transparency it risks misleading the public on performance. The GNWT is only on track to accomplish 3.3% reduction in emissions from 2022 to 2025, with no clear plan to achieve even the 30% goal by 2030. While noting the earlier 19% reductions occurring during and as a result of the pandemic, there is no acknowledgement or indication of measuring the likely bounce-back to even greater emissions such as is being experienced in other jurisdictions.

Portraying operational projects that simply maintain current hydro facilities as progressive climate action can be classified as misleading and is falsely presented as effective action in the report. Clearly, periodic retrofits such as those of the Taltson and Snare hydro facilities are essential and desirable, and can lead to enhanced efficiencies, so we do not speak against these projects at all. But, GNWT must distinguish new climate actions that achieve substantive emission reductions from operational actions that simply maintain the current system and lead to few, if any, emission reductions.

Alternatives North also has the following specific recommendations:

Full Accounting of GHG Emissions Associated with Liquid Natural Gas (LNG) GNWT has adopted a practice of switching from use of some diesel fuel to Liquid Natural

Gas (LNG), principally methane. It is unclear whether the significant life-cycle fugitive emissions are accounted for when estimating GHG reduction of LNG projects. Fugitive life cycle emissions associated with the production, handling, transport and storage of LNG are mainly methane, which has 84 times the climate warming effect as carbon dioxide. The latest research indicates that accounting for these emissions can make the use of LNG on par with use of coal in terms of overall global warming potential. Specifically in the NWT, for example, there has been at least one case of an entire truck-load of LNG being vented after rolling over on the Dempster highway. The storage tanks in Inuvik also vent methane if it is not used quickly enough. The GNWT needs to be clear and transparent in reporting whether and how these emissions are included, and to re-evaluate these projects if they have not been assessed.

### Prioritize Industrial Emissions

Of most concern is that, despite accounting for 75% of total NWT GHG emissions (including the industry component of transportation emissions), there is almost no focus on reducing industrial emissions. Industry has the capacity, and often the will, to act to reduce emissions quickly, but effective action requires GNWT to set clear standards within a non-discretionary regulatory framework. One of the NWT's major mining companies, De Beers, has committed to being carbon neutral by 2030. The GNWT should be working with this mine to understand how it is planning to accomplish this and finding ways to support these initiatives.

### Stronger initiatives for Transportation Sector

We are disappointed that there is very little effort being made to reduce emissions in the transportation sector which accounts for 55% of NWT emissions (including the industrial component of transportation emissions). There are only three pages of token actions and a weak strategic objective of 10% per capita emissions. This is compared with seven pages of initiatives on community electricity generation initiatives when that activity only accounts for 4% of emissions. Obviously, if the primary objective was to reduce emissions, transportation should be an important focus for emphasis.

### Electrical Generation

We suspect the GNWT is pinning its hopes on a Taltson expansion and transmission line to Yellowknife and beyond to make significant emissions reductions. Yet this ambitious project is highly unlikely to be built quickly enough, will cost at least a billion dollars, carries considerable risk, and there are no committed industrial customers or other demand for the electricity once it gets to Yellowknife. Alternatives North has provided a detailed critique and assessment of this intent in previous reports to your office. Instead of Taltson, federal funding should be prioritized elsewhere, such as electrifying heating and transportation in the South Slave with Taltson's existing excess electricity.

### Conclusion

As in previous correspondence, we note that the GNWT's lack of progress is not due to a lack of capacity, lack of ways to reduce emissions, or lack of demand for effective action. Rather, it is a deliberate choice to use climate funding to support projects that reduce

emissions somewhat, but are primarily focused on other priorities like subsidizing future mining development. If the GNWT truly focused on reducing emissions as a high priority, you would find that there are solutions, such as energy efficiency and establishing new building standards, renewable diesel, wood pellets and co-generation that could allow massive reductions in GHG emissions in a short period of time.

NWT leaders must turn this situation around. The GNWT must adopt an emissions reduction goal in line with the Paris Agreement, and prepare a clear strategy and action plan to address our energy future in the face of the climate crisis that is upon us. The current Report fails to meet the imperative for ambitious, timely, and cost-effective actions. The GNWT should be a knowledge leader in showing how a carbon neutral society can thrive and be prosperous in the North.

Thank you for your attention to these concerns.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. Samley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

On Behalf of Alternatives North

c:

Diane Archie, Minister of Infrastructure

Shane Thompson, Minister Environment and Natural Resources

Caroline Wawzonek, Minister of Finance