



## *Alternatives North*

c/o Box 444  
Yellowknife NT X1A 2N3

December 6, 2023

The Honourable Daniel Vandal, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Crown and Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs  
Terrasses de la Chaudière  
10 Wellington Street, North Tower  
Gatineau QC K1A 0H4  
[dan.vandal@rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca](mailto:dan.vandal@rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca)

The Honourable Shane Thompson  
Minister of Environment and Climate Change  
Government of the Northwest Territories  
Box 1320  
Yellowknife NT X1A 2L9  
[Shane.Thompson@gov.nt.ca](mailto:Shane.Thompson@gov.nt.ca)

Re: **Public Participation in a Regional Study under Part 5.2 of MVRMA**

Dear Ministers Vandal and Thompson:

Alternatives North is concerned about the lack of public participation to date in the development and design of the Regional Study pursuant to part 5.2 of the *Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act*. As public governments, the federal and territorial governments must set out a process for public involvement.

We support the concept of a Regional Study for the area between Yellowknife and the Arctic Coast including portions of Nunavut to cover the full range of the Bathurst caribou herd. We support a comprehensive, evidence-based approach that includes NWT and Nunavut interests, consideration of cumulative effects and climate change, sustainability, explicit trade-offs among competing interests, measures to ensure implementation, and public participant funding.

We are not aware of any current opportunities for public involvement. Some correspondence on the proposed Regional Study is found on an obscure “practitioners’ workshops” webpage for the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board ([https://reviewboard.ca/reference\\_material/practitioners\\_workshop](https://reviewboard.ca/reference_material/practitioners_workshop)). The status of the Regional Study was presented at the 2023 Geoscience Forum, with results showing next steps to include “discussions between Indigenous, Territorial and Federal Governments on governance structure and terms of reference”, without any reference to public input.

Alternatives North was founded in 1992 and has successfully advocated for a number of significant public policy changes and improvements over the years, including an NWT Heritage Fund, the NWT Anti-Poverty Strategy, oversight and ongoing research at the Giant Mine resulting in the Giant Mine Environmental Agreement where we are a signatory and party, and many submissions about GNWT resource management legislation that resulted in amendments to ensure public participation. We look forward to similar opportunities with regard to the Regional Study.

There was a workshop held in June 2022 with no representation from non-governmental organizations other than the mining industry. That workshop resulted in a set of principles for any Regional Study that should include:

**Partnership**

Equal participation of all parties, awareness, and consultation. Built on trust, transparency, and openness. Working together as partners towards a common goal.

**Inclusive**

Active engagement and capacity building. Meeting people where they’re at and ensuring no one gets left behind.

As Ministers of public governments responsible for this Regional Study, please implement this direction by ensuring meaningful public participation in the design and implementation of this work.

In addition to other opportunities for public participation, it is absolutely essential that there be a reasonable public comment period on a draft Terms of Reference for the Regional Study, where comments made are all public and there are public responses through written Reasons for Decision.

We look forward to your responses and to meaningful opportunities to participate in the development and implementation of the Regional Study.

Sincerely



Karen Hamre

On Behalf of Alternatives North

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