



Alternatives North

NEWS RELEASE

Yellowknife (May 28, 2009) – Alternatives North wants the Northwest Territories government to join the fight against poverty. A new Alternatives North report points to disparities in the NWT between those who benefited from the recent resource industry boom and those who did not.

NWT residents have the highest income per capita in Canada, but in some smaller communities approximately 50% of people, and 40% of NWT seniors, live in households with incomes below \$30,000. In some small Sahtu communities the cost of living can be as much as 65% higher than in Edmonton. Severe housing shortages result in overcrowding and unsafe or unhealthy living conditions.

The report was commissioned by the Canadian Council on Social Development. It summarizes key socio-economic statistics for the NWT from both NWT and Canadian government sources. The information “highlights the need to look behind the veil of wealth and ask some tough questions: How is the wealth distributed?” according to report author, Jeffrey Wilson.

Alternatives North began the push for a poverty-reduction strategy during the NWT government income security review. The NWT government used the term poverty reduction in its 2005 Income Security Policy Framework for Self-Reliance, but has yet to develop a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy with measurable outcomes and targets.

Earlier this month the Ontario government backed up its poverty-reduction strategy with legislation committing governments in that province to draft poverty-fighting strategies with specific goals every five years and to report annually to the legislature on progress. Quebec has also passed poverty reduction legislation and some other provinces have developed strategies.

“Poverty Reduction Policies and Programs: Northwest Territories” can be found at www.alternativesnorth.ca. It is part of a report series in which 14 authors discuss current federal, provincial and territorial approaches to poverty reduction. The series can be accessed at <http://www.ccsd.ca/SDR2009/SDR-2009.html>.

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