



**Presentation to the Manitoba
Clean Environment Commission**

March 26, 2004

Keewatin Community College

Dr. Anthony Bos, President

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Good Morning:

Members of the Clean Environment Commission review panel.

Members of Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation

My name is Dr. Tony Bos and I am the President of Keewatin Community College.

Keewatin Community College provides post-secondary education and training through a variety of diploma and certificate programs in the areas of business, trades and technologies, health and human services and academic preparation.

The College operates campuses in The Pas and Thompson, and regional centres in Flin Flon, Churchill, Swan River (shared with Assiniboine Community College), Pimicikamak Cree Nation (Cross Lake), Tataskweyak Cree Nation (Split Lake), Chemawawin Cree Nation (Easterville), Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (Nelson House), Mathias Colomb First Nation (Pukatawagan) and Norway House Cree Nation.

KCC also works with a variety of provincial partners to deliver programs throughout the north, ranging from literacy training to university education.

Our College serves the communities of northern Manitoba and, for the last five years, our strategic goals have been linked to the development of a distributed network of regional centres.

To this end, we are actively discussing the establishment of regional centres in other First Nations communities in northern Manitoba.

As well, we have committed a significant investment in communication technologies over the last several years that continue to enhance the ability of the College to deliver programs throughout northern Manitoba.

On behalf of the Board of Governors of Keewatin Community College, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to present our institution's perspective regarding the proposed construction of the Wuskwatim hydro electric dam on the Nelson River.

Our comments will be restricted to what we believe is our area of expertise and where we have knowledge.

Our College has no mandate to comment on the environmental impact of hydro development in northern Manitoba.

The College is mandated to support the social and economic well-being of northern Manitobans through the provision of education and training services, and we have an obligation to support well-founded initiatives of northerners -- and their communities -- to pursue economic prosperity.

In this regard, we confirm our support and respect for the aspirations of the people of Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation and will do so by engaging our resources and talents in the service of the adopted goals of the people served.

As mentioned, Keewatin Community College serves the learning needs of northern Manitobans, especially as these relate to employment, and social and economic development.

In this connection, the KCC Board of Governors created an institutional mission supported with broad goal statements which guide our institutional conduct:

- Enhance and increase opportunities for northern residents to develop skills for the Manitoba labour market
- Enhance and increase education access and learning support for Aboriginal people and communities
- Provide education and skills training for northern communities, industries, and organizations designed to meet particular skill requirements and delivered in a manner compatible with the needs and circumstances of the students
- Build, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, the social and intellectual capital of northern residents enabling the sustainable development and diversification of the northern economy

Our operational goals are:

- As a community and regional learning resource, the College will reflect the communities and people it serves.

- As the primary provider of post-secondary and adult learning in northern Manitoba, the staffing complement of the College will be representative of the population of northern Manitoba by 2008.
- In order to be relevant to the majority of the learners who register in KCC courses and programs, the College will ensure that its core values and operating structure explicitly reflect the needs, values and expectations of its customers.
- The College will continue to place priority on the development of regional centres in partnership with northern communities where interest, need and commitment exist.
- The College will fund innovations to its operating structure to create maximum access to learners who are dispersed across the region of northern Manitoba.
- The College places priority on the maximum allocation of resources enabling the development of new programs and services in response to the emerging learning needs of the region it serves, and will continuously evaluate and revise its existing programs and services in this regard.

The College has embarked on an ambitious path to implement these corporate goals. Over the past five years, the College has established regional centre partnerships with six First Nations communities in the north, including Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation.

These regional centers operate through a funding partnership with the community and the government of Manitoba, and they are managed wholly by a Board of Directors composed of a balance of community members and college staff.

The centers exist as a way for the College to understand and support the community's aspirations for social and economic development, through the provision of services.

Underlying this strategic development is the College's commitment to make its institutional agenda one of enabling the path chosen by the communities of the north.

It is important to keep in mind that in northern Manitoba, unemployment rates are significantly higher in reserve communities than in the urban centres, and that the link between unemployment and social distress is well documented.

Rough estimates suggest there are 24,000 jobs in northern Manitoba, primarily located in the urban industrial centres. This number varies with economic conditions and the seasonal nature of some of the work in the north. As well, there are over 40,000 people of labour force age (16 — 65) in northern Manitoba. In other words, there are significantly more people in northern Manitoba than there are jobs. Furthermore, demographic trends indicate that the population of Northern Manitoba is young, and getting younger.

These new entrants to the labour force need the availability of opportunity, which is scarce in most northern communities. They also need marketable skills.

Obviously, Keewatin Community College hopes to play a role in the provision of education and training required in this project.

This training will assist Aboriginal and northern people to gain skills needed to participate in the construction of the dam.

It is expected that the Wuskwatim project will provide hundreds of jobs during the construction period, and it is our understanding that residents of NCN and other northern Manitobans will be given first consideration for the jobs and training opportunities presented by the Wuskwatim project. This presents a significant opportunity to provide skills training leading to good employment prospects for residents of communities where these prospects are very limited.

The project also presents an opportunity to develop a skills legacy, that is, a cohort of northerners who will strengthen the regional economy of northern Manitoba with their skills in trade, technical, administrative, managerial and clerical occupations, derived through the Wuskwatim project.

People with these skills will enrich and build their home communities long after the construction is over.

In conclusion, we respect that communities have the right to develop their resources and we respect the agendas of the communities we serve. Once a particular community has identified its own particular developmental path, Keewatin Community College is committed to support this path as part of its institutional mandate.