



**NORTH CENTRAL
DEVELOPMENT'S**

Presentation to

**MANITOBA CLEAN
ENVIRONMENT
COMMISSION**

Thompson, Manitoba

March 23, 2004



SPEAKING NOTES

CLEAN ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION

PUBLIC HEARING, THOMPSON

MARCH 23, 2004

Good afternoon... My name is Tim Johnston. I am the Manager of the North Central Community Futures Development Corporation, operating and better known in northern Manitoba as North Central Development. It is my pleasure on behalf of the Board of Directors of North Central Development, and Chairperson Glen Flett, to have the opportunity to speak to you today regarding the proposed development of the Wuskwatim Generating Station and the related transmission facilities.

I, along with Chairperson Flett, had the opportunity to observe the proceedings in Winnipeg last week and I was also able to attend briefly in Thompson yesterday. The discussions taking place are important to the long-term sustainable economic development in northern Manitoba and the opportunity to present today is welcome and appreciated.

From our perspective, as a community economic development organization based in the North, with experience working in the North with the people who live in the North, the path forward is and will be challenging. But if pursued in the proper manner, it can be a corner stone in the foundation for a new model of community economic development in the North.

First, let me provide you with a short description of North Central Development and highlight some of our achievements in both business and community development in the region.

North Central Development began operation in the spring of 1997, supported initially in large part by Western Economic Diversification Canada. The Province of Manitoba has also contributed support from a number of Departments. North Central Development is a community-based initiative designed to enhance community and economic development in the North Central Region of Manitoba.

A volunteer Board of Directors, representing each of our seventeen member communities, provides direction to the Management of the corporation.

The corporation provides services to, and assists with, the delivery of programs in each of the seventeen communities. These northern Manitoba communities include; three Urban Industrial, seven Northern Affairs and seven First Nations stretching from Norway House in the south to Churchill in the north following the Hudson Bay railroad or more traditionally, the Burntwood, Grass River and Nelson river systems. The area encompasses one hundred and thirty eight thousand square kilometers with a population of approximately thirty five thousand people.

North Central Developments' mission statement is to:

Endeavour to bring together to support, develop and promote communities, individuals, organizations, businesses and other appropriate stakeholders within the North Central region to encourage self-reliance and enhance the social and economic quality of life.

In order to meet our stated mission statement, North Central Development operates aggressively in an entrepreneurial manner being proactive and partnership driven. Over the past six years, a number of programs and initiatives have been implemented in both Community and Business Development that have created long term, sustainable impacts on the economic environment of the region.

Community Development initiatives include:

- The Integrated Waste Management Program.
- An annual Youth Entrepreneur Summer Camp
- An Entrepreneurs with Disabilities Program
- The Transfer of the Thompson Regional Airport
- The creation of the Churchill North Gateway Council
- The Northern E-Business Centre

➤ The Discover Manitoba Conference & Expo Inc.

The Corporation relies upon its well-established network of partnerships to accomplish proposed projects, as well as looking for opportunities to develop new initiatives.

North Central Development is also active in Business Development. Acting as a lender of last resort, individuals and businesses who would normally not qualify for a business loan through traditional financial institutions are the targeted clients of North Central Development, with a variety of loan funds available. North Central Development currently has over one hundred and forty two loans outstanding for small business start-ups or expansion, ranging in size from five hundred dollar peer lending circle loans in the Tataswayak Cree Nation to loans of approximately one hundred thousand dollars. With an original principal balance of over two point five million dollars, the Corporation has maintained a loan loss rate of approximately eight per cent, well under the normal rate for developmental lenders.

At least, two hundred and fifty jobs have been created or maintained as a result of these new business start-ups. The spin-off implications to the region's economy are staggering.

In addition to business loans, North Central Development provides and is involved in the following programs and services;

- Assisted in expansion of FORD Motor Company's Winter Weather testing program in Thompson
- Delivery of the Self-Employment Assistance Program (Manitoba)
- Delivery of the Junior Achievement Program in the North
- Delivery of the Aboriginal Business Canada program in the North

North Central Development's combined experiences in Business and Community Development provide a unique perspective on the current state of economic development in the central and northern part of the province.

North Central Development sees a region that needs to look to change. A region where the old way of doing things is no longer the only acceptable option. New ways and new models must be identified and initiated. In doing so, a measure of respect must be extended to all involved and all the opinions put forward.

The development of the Wuskwatim Generating Station and Transmission Lines provides northern Manitoba with an opportunity to learn from past experience and create a new model for economic development.

Past experience has taught us that the future must be built on honesty, trust, partnerships and mutual benefits. Where the traditionally economy cannot be discounted at any or all costs in favor of an industrial economy. Where the benefits accrued must be true and equal. The previous models for hydro development have not provided such an environment in northern Manitoba.

The proposed Wuskwatim project, and more importantly, the Agreement in principle between the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation and Manitoba Hydro, gives northern Manitoba the opportunity to create a new model of community economic development. A model that can provide training, jobs and business opportunities. However, it must be pointed out that the success of this project will not be the building of a Dam at the end of the day, but rather whether the "can" becomes "will" in the achievement and realization of the potential of the Dam in supporting a lasting sustainable legacy and benefits.

Training must be relevant and create a skill workforce that can meet the long-term needs of a region that currently has a large unemployed population, yet suffers from a lack of skilled labour. The training needs to be meaningful, respectful and provide hope to our youth that the future can be different than the present. Training cannot only be a "the cost of doing business".

Jobs for our youth and workforce must be respectful and provide opportunities for advancement. They cannot be token or designed to meet quotas. Northern Manitoba needs to appeal to and retain our youth with job opportunities.

Business opportunities must be real and sustainable. North Central Development has embarked on a Study with the financial assistance of Aboriginal Business Canada that will identify "Sustainable Aboriginal Businesses and Hydro Opportunities". I will acknowledge the support of Manitoba Hydro in assisting the research team in compiling data for the study. Initial findings point to specific business opportunities as a result of the project and more importantly, using the project to initiate business starts that can then become sustainable based on an emerging service economy in the north.

Of course, a critical element to this project is the proposed partnership between NCN and Manitoba Hydro with respect to an equity portion of the Wuskwatim Project. This is central to a new model of economic development in the North. This has the opportunity to change the face of the north. To create an ownership stake that will provide benefits for generations. To create a partnership with a true sense of sharing resources...and rewards.

In achieving the above, we can establish a healthy environment for human and economic growth that can benefit the people of the North now and into the future.

North Central Development believes this project presents the best and most realistic opportunity to provide a chance, a golden opportunity, to enhance training throughout the region that will be of benefit to all Northerners and to all Manitobans. It provides real, tangible action in creating employment for the North in a meaningful, respectful and sustainable way.

It provides the environment to promote entrepreneurial activities, as well as assisting the entrepreneurs who can contribute to long-term wealth generation in the North.

Most importantly for North Central Development, this project presents the opportunity to move the North away from the models of a "social transfer economy" and an "industrial economy" towards the model of a "wealth generation economy". What we see is the chance to build more than a dam. We see a chance at a true and honest commitment to the people of the North. We see a chance to work within a process of development based on economic need, social growth and the advancement of human potential.

The arguments against the project? There are many. They vary from the theoretical to the esoteric. We have neither the background nor the desire to dispute numbers. What we do have is first hand knowledge of the positive impact this project can represent to the North. Up here, this project can represent opportunities that will change the daily living environment of whole communities.

Training a workforce to develop marketable skills is not theory. It will help northerners. Building infrastructure, where so much is needed, is not esoteric. It will help northerners.

North Central Developments mission is to help the people of our region to achieve sustainable economic growth while building strong and viable communities. We see this project as a substantial and positive step in achieving that mission.

North Central Development applauds the Province of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro on this consultative process. We are in complete support of Manitoba Hydro's cooperative development model with the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation in Nelson House.

Thank you.