

Presentation to the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission Public

Hearings on the Wuskwatim Generation and Transmission Project by

Mayor Gary Hopper, Town of The Pas

Mr. Chairman, Commissioners - I am Gary Hopper, Mayor of the Town of The Pas.

Before providing a few brief comments on the Wuskwatim projects that are the subject of your review, I welcome you to The Pas. I trust you are enjoying the true northern hospitality of our communities.

I am appearing before you today not only as the Mayor, but also as a long time resident of northern Manitoba. I am not an environmental expert, but I do wish to provide some broad comments that can assist in your deliberations.

At the risk of stating the obvious, the economy of northern Manitoba is based on the region's natural resources. Indeed natural resources served the needs of the area's first residents and ultimately attracted European explorers to the area, with the fur trade an important part of our community's history. Later, commercial fishing and trapping became an important part of the northern economy and were followed by other resource developments including timber harvesting for our sawmills, mining and smelting, agriculture and eventually pulp and paper production. These developments provided the foundation of our northern economy and resulted in investments in infrastructure -roads, schools, hospitals - and tax bases that are essential to our quality of life today.

To us, resource development is not something abstract; it is not the subject of academic debate nor philosophical musings of special interest groups. It is our life and our reality.

The Wuskwatim projects that are the focus of your review are a continuation of the development of northern Manitoba's hydro-electric resources, which are a key component of the north's resource based economy.

Our resource industries need a secure, reliable and economic electricity supply to prosper and compete in world markets. Our residents are heavily dependent upon electricity to meet their domestic needs. Unlike the south, we do not have the option of natural gas. We only need to look at last year's blackouts in central Canada and the United States and the energy supply situation in Ontario to emphasize the need to invest in energy transmission and reliable new energy supplies. From this perspective, I understand the Wuskwatim transmission component will serve to increase reliability to our community. So an obvious message that I would present to you is that projects like Wuskwatim that add to an economic and reliable energy supply are essential and important to our residents and businesses.

Development of hydro resources will provide major economic stimulus to the north. Large capital construction projects provide opportunity for training, skill development, employment and business opportunities. I understand that these construction projects have a limited time span, but they play a critical role in increasing opportunity for **northerners** to improve their