



# MANITOBA BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION TRADES COUNCIL

EXHIBIT # OTH-1034  
WUSKWATIM GENERATION  
& TRANSMISSION PROJECT  
  
CLEAN ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION

A Presentation to the

## **Manitoba Clean Environment Commission**

On the proposed  
**Wuskwatim Generating Station  
And Transmission Project**

Presented By

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**Manitoba Building and Construction Trades Council Presentation Regarding  
Wuskwatim Generating Station and Transmission Project to the Manitoba  
Clean Environment Commission**

The Manitoba Building and Construction Trades Council is pleased to present the Clean Environment Commission with our views and policies as they relate to the proposed Wuskwatim Generating Station and Transmission Project

The Manitoba Building and Construction Trades Council consists of sixteen affiliated craft unions and represent over 5,000 construction workers within Manitoba. The MBCTC has served the interest of craft workers for over ninety years, promoting fair wages, improving working conditions, promoting member education and training programs and promoting our members in their goals of have a safe and healthy workplace.

We support the Wuskwatim project for the economic benefits that it offers all of Manitobans and in particular, those living in the north. Major developments such a Wuskwatim Generating Station and Transmission Project have the potential to offer an unprecedented level of training opportunities and jobs for those working on the project.

Minister Reg Alcock, President of the Treasury Board, Minister Responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and on behalf of the Honourable Joe Volpe, Minister of Human Resources Development, in announcing a \$22 million investment into Northern Training, stated that he appreciated the wide range of partners involved and added that this initiative will put Northern Manitoba Aboriginal People front and centre in filling the growing demand for a skilled workforce.

We have learned that poverty is not the only barrier to success. Systematic barriers are deterrents for Aboriginal or Northern people wishing to enter a trade. These include

- Program funding that is inconsistent or lacking
- Misleading information; want people to train but then can't find jobs
- Project related training that is inadequate, leaving the student unable to work on the dam site but able to build a house on reserve. If they choose not to leave the community, the job ends when the project ends.
- Industry driven programs lack cross cultural training
- Lack of community and or Aboriginal Business in program design and ongoing monitoring
- Funds can be limited for supplies (hard hats, boots)
- Too much repeat training with out Certification

In addition, those wanting to enter a trade and become integrated into Canada's workplace face internal barriers as well. These include:

- Prejudice or lack of cultural awareness on the site.
- Hiring tends to be done by word of mouth; contractors tend to bring their own workers in from other provinces.
- Formal education, Grade 12
- Low Self esteem
- Lack of skills and knowledge
- Lack of mobility

- Lack of transportation
- Cycles of poverty; dependence of social assistance
- Isolation, either in location or on the job
- Lack of after care and follow-up

During the Limestone Project great numbers of Northern Aboriginals were promised that they would reap the benefits of the construction through a provision for Northern Aboriginals and residents. The Burntwood/Nelson Collective Agreement contained provision for hiring but no provision for training.

As a result, very few Aboriginal people worked in designated trades areas on the project and went on to become journeymen.

Some of the events that occurred on the Limestone Project will re-occur if we are not diligent in the training and tracking of Aboriginal and northern apprentices. For example, the Northern Resident Employment Committee's Annual Report of 1999 demonstrates the following: In the period of 1986 to 1991 the percentage of Northern Aboriginals working as high as 31%. Resignations from this group, however, were as high as 132% Discharged workers in the same period added to this group with a high of 13%. Of the 46 workers remaining at the end of the seven-year period, 60% worked in non-construction occupations such as catering, security guard, and labourer. Very few individuals had the opportunity to reach Journeymen status in their trade.

Understandably, the manner in which mega Hydro projects have addressed training has broken promises and spirit. Wuskwatim give us the opportunity to work together to heal



the spirits of Aboriginal and northern people, and to provide them with meaningful, productive training.

Real partnerships and investment in training and employment will to be embraced by the MBCTC and the Allied Hydro Council. We will address the past and present barriers and remember the lessons that we have been taught. This is most important now, as the Aboriginal population is growing at three times the rate of the non-aboriginal population. It is suggested that by 2006, the population of working age Aboriginals will number 920,000 nationally, with the majority residing in Western Canada. This is a challenge to the Construction Sector to take advantage of an increasing labour pool. To achieve this, we must start now, so we have journeymen ready for the future. Currently only 3% of the workers in construction are Aboriginal or Metis. Given shortages that exist now or will occur, this growth in population will provide an important resource

We believe that the training of Northern aboriginals and residents has to be customized to the learner.

Studies have shown that institutional learning does not produce the same required results in Northern areas as it does in southern or mainstream areas due to lower education levels, cultural bias and teaching methodology. With traditional oral culture, learning is best achieved by exploration, communication and hands on experience. In theory, the Apprenticeship system would seem to be a very good fit with 80% of the work being practical and on-the-job and 20% in the classroom. This is not the case.

Bias wording of material used at work and Apprenticeship exams result in failure.

During the building of the Limestone Generating Station there were carpenters and electricians trained, to name a few, however when it came time to build the dam, the training had made participants able to build or wire a house, but none had learned the skills required to be productive at the site. Potential journeymen were either let go or resigned because they were unprepared for the work. The end result was very few apprentices who could continue their training and fewer journeymen who could teach them.

Training needs to be relevant to the learner: Having to learn Job Specific Workplace Essential Skills and applying Prior Learning Assessment, will help to ensure that the lack of formal education does not become a barrier to success.

There has to be significant lead-time to make participants "Employment Ready" to ensure that Northern Aboriginals will be nearing the last year of apprenticeship or have become a journeyman. Cultural Awareness Training should be provided to every person on the work site.

Job Orientation, Life Skills, Pre-employment, upgrading, hands on "paid" training, mentoring, job shadowing, consistent evaluations and follow-up should be provided. A conscious effort to provide "real" training and work, with results should be adhered to. Hours in training should be recognized as apprenticeship hours and Certification outside of Apprenticship, when required (Advanced Labourers, Equipment Operators) should be implemented.

Most of the jobs created on this project will be unionized under the Burntwood Nelson Agreement between Hydro Management and the Allied Hydro Council, which is made up of unions in the Manitoba Building and Construction Trades Council. This Agreement is currently being re-negotiated. Construction will take approximately 6 years.

The MBCTC recognizes the difficulty of the past and the potential for the future. The Wuskwatim Generating Station and the Transmission Project will generate 100 jobs in the first two years, however most will be in non-designated trades such as labourers, catering, security and clerical staff.

This will allow the MBCTC to promote the Northern Aboriginal employment in these areas while preparing participants to move towards their career goals in the trades through Assessment and placement with an employer, or training.

Northern Aboriginals should have input in developing and validating the methods and language of training programs. In addition, relationships must be forged with community members and they should take on the role of stakeholders (ownership) and provide the Apprentice "front line" access to the Apprenticeship Program.

We are also pleased to see that workplace health and safety will be given a high priority on the Wuskwatim Project. Recent studies indicate that the highest number of accidents involve, young, in experienced and under trained workers.

The future of the province looks bright for the next ten years or so with the potential of more Hydro work including Conawapa and Gull-Keeyask, as well as projects such as the Floodway Expansion Project, a new Hydro Building and the Manitoba-Nunavut Road that is currently being studied.

Wuskwatim marks a new era in the developments in Northern Manitoba. It is a model of how communities can work in partnership with developers like Manitoba Hydro- allowing them to share in the profits and opportunities generated by the development.

The potential future growth in this generation and the next will show itself by excellence in community schools, the development of a learning culture, plans for post secondary education, to be a tradesperson or a doctor, a prosperous community where buildings, business and houses are being built and the promise of a bright tomorrow. To reach this potential there must first, be hope. With the Wuskwatim Generating Station and the Transmission Project a reality, there is indeed hope.