

**Northern Municipal Roundtable
Tuesday January 19, 2010**

Notes

Co-Chairs:

- Minister Jeremy Harrison, Municipal Affairs
- Minister Bill Hutchinson, FNMR
- Mayor Bobby Woods, New North Chair

Meeting called to order by Co-Chair Bobby Woods at 8:40 am.

Opening Prayer: Eugene Kimbley, Beauval

Opening Comments

Minister Harrison: I appreciate the opportunity. It's a pleasure to be here and I look forward to the discussion. I have experience with northern issues as an MP. I did what I could to advance your interests. I continued to do that in my staff role in Ottawa, and now as an MLA. Important agenda.: (listed from agenda). Look forward to discussions & know they will be productive.

Mayor Woods: Good morning. I know it will be a productive day. We welcome open dialogue and answers to our questions. *(Bobby introduced ministers and representatives.)*

It's good to see a good turnout from the north and from government. It's good to see the support is here for us.

We as New North have gathered on several occasions. We have been disappointed from time to time, but realized there was some miscommunication. We made some statements with good intentions. Thanks to the ministers for being here.

We want to be assured we will have commitments about accountability and timelines.

We've been resolving some issues for around 20-30 years. We heard our fathers and grandparents talking about same issues. Times, technology, people have changed, but we talk about the same issues. We need to come to a conclusion and move forward.

The ministers have had time to prepare and respond, and we expect answers. As a collective voice we deserve these answers. We need to know what, who and when. If it's going to take 10 years, tell us.

We had a productive gathering yesterday, a good talk about where we are and what we want to do. We have serious commitment from leadership for their communities. It takes time and money; we need to start now. We're fortunate to have these ministers and officials with us today.

I wish everyone a great day – don't be afraid to voice your opinions.

Minister Hutchinson: Everyone's busy. There are all kinds of issues we need to address. I do a lot of travelling in north – mining, fishing and other exciting things are going on in the northern economy. We have been weathered out several times Stony/Athabasca – we're on again for next week. We have to talk to people face to face.

This is the Year of the Métis. This was started by Robert Doucette, who wrote to the premier, who said absolutely! We planned a ceremony with Robert and his team, which was a powerful experience. Back to Batoche will be huge this year.

We've been watching economic development – there are 13 new Enterprise Regions in the south and a recognition REDAs could achieve more. The ERs' have been up and running for a year. We wanted to keep talking with northern leaders to find out if there's as much interest as we think. We found they're excited. We will make it happen despite budget challenges. We will announce three brand new ERs. We recognized that two was too big, the economies are different and so are travel and trade patterns. If it can be done, it will be done.

We know the **northern fishery** is in trouble and has spent decades locked into an agreement which seemed a good idea at the time. If the plant was run at top efficiency and a marketing plan was done, there's no doubt the best fish in the world could reach any market. The corporation is not pulling it off, so we have announced we will leave that arrangement and reestablish the fishery in northern Saskatchewan. The business plan is prepared, there's some financial assistance, and the next step is to build the corporation. While the regulatory stuff is advancing, we will withdraw from FFMC – it's an exciting time. There's lots of work to do, but it's vital to the economy of the north and the province. If this province is to succeed, the northern economy has to succeed.

There's a commitment to get something done on **Duty to Consult** this spring. Everyone wants closure. We've been requested by FSIN and MNS to hold off for a couple of months while they finalize their understanding of the duty to consult. This is expected in March. Once everyone knows the rules the system will be in play April 2010.

We have serious **social issues** – youth suicide. We have put together a small ad hoc pilot program which was reasonably successful. Three coordinators were hired, with a mandate to talk to people and say what would work. The result is encouraging. If it takes a generation to develop, it can't be solved right away. In the next budget we'll be looking for a larger plan. It's a huge challenge. It's all about the children and increasing their chance to survive.

Bobby Woods: I talked to Minister Hutchinson last night about the fishing industry. We have outfitters, sport fishermen and opportunity for tourism, but know the fish are limited. Some lakes are fished out, some are declining. Northern Saskatchewan requires a fish hatchery.

On the economy: I sit on SUMA. The economic corridor starts in the US and runs through Saskatoon to Battleford to Alberta. Northern Sask has a big opportunity for tourism – we have outfitters. We need to have that corridor run into that part of our territory. We need to take advantage. I feel privileged to have the ministers here.

Open dialogue

Garry Carriere: I am a commercial fisherman for 35 years. I'm happy to be sit in the largest freshwater delta , but we have to do inventory and better management. We can still manage if we keep a close eye. In Cumberland we have the E.B. Campbell dam upstream on the Saskatchewan River. The people of Cumberland House are warning governments that the largest freshwater delta in North America is dying. Any time we disrupt nature there's a consequence – we don't always see it right now. 60 years ago the dam was built; now the lake is down to 3 feet of water from 23 feet. All parts of the world come to our delta every year , but governments down even know there's such a thing in the province. The power dam generates money, and we all need power , but at the same time, what's happening to our resources? We have to do inventory, study – if the stock is OK, we need to help. Start putting words into action and start babysitting our resources.

Response: Liz Quarshie, Deputy Minister, Environment: You're right. We are fortunate in this province regarding resources. We do need to manage them. I have no detailed answer because I do not have all the information on the management of the dam. The Ministry of Environment is cognizant of how to use solid science-based decisions along with traditional knowledge. We know when you start to operate a dam you need to maintain a head of water and those does affect the depth of a waterbody. I can't comment on the operation of the dam.

Garry Carriere: *We don't have scientific proof, but we have first-hand information. The average ice depth is 3 feet, the depth of the lake is 3 feet. It affects the food chain. Without government assistance on resources, everything will die. Millions of waterfowl and migratory birds depend on that marsh too. We were given the responsibility to look after all animals. We're neglecting the responsibility given to us by God. Without the resources this province is nothing – not only fisheries – we have non-renewable resources we'll never see again once used, but renewable resources we have to start managing.*

Response: Bobby Woods: We have a lot of concerns and asked for possible solutions, New North used to have several committees; we need them again. We have fishermen who are experienced;

Response: Minister Harrison: My ministry will coordinate this, along with Bill's shop.

Response: Minister Hutchinson: It's a terrific idea – more commitments, more work, but that's what we're here for. We can be a resource for e.g. watershed management. D DM Quarshie's shop has technical information.

Greg Ross: Northern Affairs – I believe this is a stand alone discussion. It's déjà vu – we went through this in the Devine era. You have had two years of finding an effective method of working with the province. We are concerned about how we as northerners become active participants. One of thing we heard – the Saskatchewan party believes people build a province. I'm looking forward to when that begins, and it has not yet. It was the same round when the Devine era took off and there was total disregard for northern participation in the first two years. They needed a doorway so they created northern affairs, with dedication and commitment for open and honest dialogue. This results in organizations and committees. There were a lot of success stories when we look back on how effective northern affairs can be. Were hoping for eight ministers here today; if we see three a year we get to see you once every three years. We need ongoing dialogue, open and honest. Northern Affairs was that doorway. You shut the door – I hope it can be reopened. I am in no way challenging the department or suggesting that you cannot accomplish it. You need to go back and talk about what Northern Affairs should and could do. The New North entity was created because of the relationship with Northern Affairs. I hope you can revisit that – we need dedicated dollars for dialogue on a daily basis.

Response: Minister Hutchinson: It's not our intention to shut any doors. The doors are open and we want them to remain open. I like to talk face to face about issues – that's why I'm travelling around the north. I plan to keep doing that. If there's something Northern Affairs could be doing – pick up the phone. We can't understand if we're not on the ground.

Mayor Bobby Woods: *We used to be a region of our own, with subregions. We got to know each other very well. Before your time the boundaries changed so half the province reports to North Battleford and the rest to Prince Albert for social services, corrections etc and this broke the ties with the north. We knew who we were talking to – we lost that.*

Mayor Duane Favel: *Cree comments. Welcome all ministers, thank you for being here. As northern Saskatchewan leaders we have a unique culture, heritage, languages . We are very proud and respectful people. When we come together in this type of forum – we felt neglected for many years. We had charismatic and visionary leaders in the past who brought us to where we are.*

How should the resource have been shared with northern Saskatchewan? We talked revenue sharing following inquiry recommendations – sharing so we could still flourish and function as northern communities. That’s where we’ll always be. We have a right to thrive in northern Saskatchewan. This is why we lobby government and industry to help resolve the many issues we place before you today.

Of all the money from resources in northern Saskatchewan – how is that money coming back to northern Saskatchewan to sustain our communities? What is that formula for redirecting money back into northern communities? Do you have any comments to address that?

Response: Minister Harrison: I appreciate the question. I know that’s a real and valid concern. It’s not a new issue. The minister talked about municipal operating grants.

Infrastructure needs are substantial and we have made a good start on some, e.g. water and sewer. There’s a lot of need and I understand and sympathize and we will work together to address the concerns.

Response: Minister Hutchinson: In addition to specific programs where we take dollars from across the province and redirect a portion north, we also build the flagging northern economy. We help as fast and effectively as possible. Thus the ERs –

We’ve always had controversy – a rural-urban split. Urban Saskatchewan can't reach it’s potential unless rural Saskatchewan is thriving. The same kind of idea applies to the north and south. We want to make sure the northern economy is developed, along with the south – make sure all the kids educated and have a job to go to. From the thriving economy will come skills and dollars.

Response: Minister Harrison: In the long/medium term, the key is having young people educated in northern Saskatchewan. There are hurdles in going to the cities to further their education.

Mayor Bobby Woods: *I have a concern about the education of young adults at Northlands College. In Buffalo Narrows we have a student residence. At times there’s not enough room. A concern came up yesterday that Creighton is very limited because of limited residence capacity. I would ask government what they can do make sure that where there’s a learning institution, they can accommodate students. There’s a high dropout in many programs because there’s no place to stay.*

Response: Minister Hutchinson: It was a good day in La Ronge when we announced the expansion of NORTEP residences. There’s a great need.

Response: Minister Harrison: NORTEP is a shining example of a success story. We hopefully look forward to more.

Mayor Fred McCallum: Thank you to Bobby and the executive, ministers and associates.

To Minister Hutchinson: I appreciate your comments about youth. The big problem is drugs. Some people are caught and let go. One way to solve the problem is stronger punishment – a few years in jail.

There should be work programs along with social assistance – e.g. you are cleaning under power lines with a feller-buncher; our people could do that. When they are young they want to do something – we have to start training them to work when young.

Education – we had a meeting in Buffalo Narrows 2-3 years ago when the Chamber of Commerce president came from Fort McMurray. One of their school subjects is a work program around oil and gas. Here we have mining; we should have that kind of subject in our schools.

Response: Minister Hutchinson: Youngsters should learn that the right thing to do is work for a living and contribute to the community. Hutchinson quoted Chief Clarence Louie of Osoyoos , who makes kids work. He invited kids from all over the country to see what they are doing, and he puts them to work. No one comes on the place without a job, and each must contribute to the extent they can with whatever abilities. It's most important to find your abilities and develop them. He says travel, but get an education and a job. Better than that – create a job.

Mayor Bobby Woods: *We're still stuck in a rut. We need to give people self worth – put welfare dollars into work programs that benefit our communities. We will have that conversation with the minister. We feel lost because we don't meet the criteria for funding. In a small community like Bear Creek it makes no sense to put a \$2 million recreational facility there, and they don't qualify. But they could use a few thousand dollars for a gathering place. We must make sure their needs are looked after.*

Terri Daniels: *I have a concern with promoting education in our communities. For our people to get high-end jobs in the mines need to excel in math and science. We don't have the facilities to provide that. Most of us depend on band schools; some are not happy with the level of education being provided so we send out to boarding school. Kids are still having to go through that. I'd like to see an exchange, also to make sure kids are getting a good education in the band-run schools. For example, the Wollaston high school is overcrowded so they took our science labs to make room for classrooms. It was still crowded so they built an elementary school, which is already overcrowded. We have over 500 kids going to school, plus 300 who should be in school. So community just lets the ones that want to go to school . We asked for a training centre in Stony; we did our homework, with Northlands College. A lot of programs we ship people out for are less than a year, so they leave their families behind. If we could get university programs in our region, people wouldn't have to go south. If they then wanted to further their education they would be comfortable going out. Some go to university but are two years behind – grade 12 is really Gade 10 in the north. We have to help the kids excel through better services. Why our training centre was turned down I don't know.*

Response: Minister Hutchinson: This came to my attention in December. I could not get to the Fond du Lac meeting. Nobody has said no. We will talk about it more – I am going to Stony for that. Getting new money this year will be a real challenge. Let's get creative and innovative.

Response: Minister Harrison: Re band schools: one of the suggestions I was going to make was that on our next opportunity to get together, we invite Rob Clark as well.

Mayor Andy McKay: *Welcome ministers. The big deterrent to youth and education in our community is drugs. We struggle in a lot of communities. We see youth in the courtrooms, doing break and enters to buy drugs. If we want to educate our people, the first thing we have to do is stop the flow of drugs. It's a deterrent to a brighter future. We discuss it with the RCMP – they know who the dealers are, yet there's no response. It's time municipal and provincial governments do something about this. Kids have no future if drugs come in month after month – marijuana, cocaine, all kinds of illegal drugs. I want to see government take the initiative with the RCMP. Sooner or later someone has to take the initiative. We must focus on what training they need and what kind of jobs are available in the province. We have*

struggled to provide opportunities because of high unemployment rates. Government should get involved for them to have a future – work 2-3 months of a year so they learn what work is all about. They get into trouble because there's nothing to do. We could bring up their academics by saying if you stay in school we will give you a job for the summer, a career path, to stay away from alcohol and drugs. We had four openings for summer students last year – 40 young people applied. We need work programs for young people.

Response: Mayor Bobby Woods: Thanks for the good strong statement. I share the same view, so do many others. I don't totally blame our young people – adults need to learn what to do when they see something, or a child in trouble from drug or alcohol abuse. People are scared to say anything – we need government to help through programs and employment, also strict and harsh penalties. It gives our community time to realign. When we see people seriously ill or died – it impacts families, young people. There's a lot of concern.

Response: Minister Harrison: I will pass the concerns onto Justice – also federal responsibility for RCMP.

Gary Carriere: *Education is very important, but not everyone is gifted in academics. They could be the best hardworking people physically – we have to target those people too. Why are people turning to drugs – ask them and they say it's boring, nothing to do – they can't go to work in the mines because they don't have an education. It's not true, but know a lot of good hands-on programs to do. If the RCMP throws someone in, they come out in 2 years and the problem continues. We need to get to the root of the problem. "The law is there to protect the criminal".*

Response: Minister Hutchinson: Re employment at mines: I talked to someone who said they would hire anyway, and put on a course to complete grade 12. You need grade 12 to get into technical jobs. A lot are done with retired SIAST instructors. Regarding what can the RCMP do? It's about crime prevention and law enforcement. Crime prevention depends on community involvement. If you say you will not tolerate it . . . talk to your police officers and see how you can help them out.

Mayor Bobby Woods: Individual concerns include:

Ambulance costs: – once they reach 65 on a fixed income, they can't afford an ambulance and may not call when one is needed. In Buffalo Narrows if the ambulance takes you to the clinic it's \$200; if to the hospital, no charge. There's a high cost for patients going to southern clinics – they have a tough time surviving.

Uranium City airport: Used to handle all kinds of aircraft but has been downsized, narrowed and shortened. There's a need for larger aircraft.

Green Lake RCMP – want to relocate into Meadow Lake – but Green Lake is in the Northern Admin District and they should be able to maintain a detachment there. It's the gateway to northern Saskatchewan. It makes no sense to move out.

Mayor Duane Favel: *Over the break, people felt answers were not quite satisfactory. We want more detail about work to be done.*

Education – a month ago an indicators report was released on education in Saskatchewan. Northern school divisions are at the bottom of the list re achievement and success. What we expect is the plan to address that.

Population health; There are high rates of infectious disease, lack of physical activity. Northern Saskatchewan suffers and we're at the bottom. What is the ministry doing in terms of planning etc. Reports been out there for a while.

Response: Minister Hutchinson: – no ministry looks after all; it must be a group of ministries. We have 17 ministries and all have to talk more to each other. We're starting to see that. Northerners said they want and need Enterprise Regions. We had to go back to Enterprise Saskatchewan. Once the consultant does his homework we will have good idea of what northerners are saying. Education –its our job to make sure FNMR is at the table when other ministries are formulating a plan. We are advocates for FN and Métis perspectives.

Chair passed to Minister Harrison

Greg Ross: *The executive is concerned to get every minister – we know one minister is not answerable to the others. We know we can't get every minister every year. We felt if the right ministers give us their direction, we're working on the same page. We hope when we leave here today we're not working in opposite directions. The answers are important so no-one is spinning wheels.*

For future meetings, who will be her to give us that direction? We want to go home with solid answers, If this is not the forum, what is?

Response: Minister Harrison: I appreciate your comments. There were challenges in putting together this gathering – Mayor Woods is a very strong advocate for New North, and was strong in making this happen. We will work together towards the next gathering but will have more lead time to get other colleagues here.

Response: Minister Hutchinson: We have a number of folks here from our ministry – we have a breakout room so if you want to grab our folks and talk to them . . .

Northern Highways Strategy

Jim Reiter, Minister, Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure.

A number of MHI officials also attended.

Last June three Northern Transportation Advisory Committees were formed North Northeast, North Northwest, and Athabasca. The Minister listed the people and organizations involved. They are modelled on the existing rural highways strategy and intended to evaluate priorities, take the politics out and help the province start making investments that would build the economy. Because of the unique challenges for the north , they settled on a set of criteria:

- Isolation
- Size
- Is there a seasonal road?
- Engineering and economics
- Socio-economics and functional activities factor
- Safety/accidents/ dangerous spills
- Economy – daily traffic, the economic/tourism factor
- Partnerships

54 provincial highway road sections were evaluated and ranked. There was a separate process for the Athabasca Basin. Community access to support the needs of northern residents was considered.

Timeline: Work has already started. Highway 155 contracts were released last Saturday. The 15 km upgrade includes gravel crushing this winter, and construction in spring/summer 2010. The highway supports logging, tourism, mineral exploration, communities. The province will move

as fast as financial resources allow. The highest-ranking projects will have a five-year capital construction plan.

The work of the 14-member Northern Transportation Committee (NTC) is to help develop a clear business plan and present a much stronger case for highways infrastructure. There's potentially a tough budget year ahead. Coming into 2010, we point to a strong year ahead. I would like to tell you exactly when work will begin, but I can't right now. The minister made several more comments.

Development of the aviation component – northern airports are crucial. Maintenance and upgrades are covered as part of the NTC.

Athabasca basin: includes the Wollaston road, and upgrades to the Athabasca seasonal Road. This will be looked at separate and apart because of a significant funding partnership with the federal government and industry. If there's no progress, it will be moved into the strategy. Clearing of the 1st 35 km of the Wollaston road is complete; grading on the 1st 10 km is ongoing. The province intends to complete it.

\$39.9 million was allocated for the north in the past budget year – that's \$1,000 per person, double the amount in the south. More is required. The NTC had a plan that's transparent. It never existed before for this region.

Mayor Andy McKay – *our community is ranked 21-30. I'm disappointed. In 2005 Cumberland House sustained a flood in the delta, and one road leading in was inundated with water. 500 people were displaced, taken to Prince Albert, Saskatoon and other places. Here was one death during that time. For a lot of elders it was the first time leaving. There's a big safety issue on our highway. Safety is an ongoing issue; we've been lobbying government for a long time. It's the oldest settlement in western Canada and now in the 21st century we have no commitment to do something with our highway.*

Response: Minister Reiter: The committee was given a difficult task. In the past we were not transparent, but we wanted to be. Whatever the ranking it's our intention to get to all of those projects. Also the committee work is ongoing, and they will re-evaluate projects as they go along.

Mayor Andy McKay: *If they cannot upgrade it right away, we would like to at least build up the areas where water inundated the road so if there's another flood situation . . . it needs to be addressed because of safety concerns. We had previous meetings in Cumberland House, they brought engineers to check if it could be done.*

Response: Minister Reiter: If there are certain areas you're concerned about, I will ask my officials to review it again.

Mayor Duane Favel: *On the 18 km access road to Ile a la Crosse: we have a regional health facility, and the road from junction to the airport is very terrible of ambulances. Is that included? We do serve the surrounding communities. We see ambulances daily at fairly high speeds.*

Response: Minister Reiter: No but if there's a maintenance issue we'll have our officials look at that.

Mayor Duane Favel: *We appreciate this report and this map.*

Response: Minister Reiter: Again commend good work of committee.

Mayor Bobby Woods: *I support Mayor Favel – the access road is widely used and it's an awful thing.*

Greg Ross: *In terms of the NTCs, it was New North who worked on that initiative with government to make the committee structure and make sure it is transparent. Is that still coordinated through this committee? We also understand the north is under review – we would like to reinforce New North’s role within the committee system. Are you increasing the information flow to the transportation Committees so that when they meet with us we get all the information?*

Response: Minister Reiter: Their work deals with prioritization. Our officials work closely with them so they will be a valuable source of information for them.

Mayor Fred McCallum: *A problem we have in our community – Meadow Lake is close by, but we’re part of northern Saskatchewan. Make sure Highways stays there and does not move to Meadow Lake. The NAD line should be considered.*

Terri Daniels: *The information should have gone to the communities. I’d like to see the timeline for the Wollaston Lake road. We started talking road 36 years ago – study after study was done – and it was a lot cheaper then. Now we have 10 km built, more cleared. The willows will cover the cleared area by time you go ahead. We would like to see a timeline in a letter to the leaders in the Athabasca.*

Last year the ice went out July 14, so the barge was late starting. It is used by residents to bring in stuff, also fuel for the schools and houses, with a backhaul of fish. It broke down, no way to fix it, we had to get a transmission from Germany – it cost a lot of money to fix. When will you start working on the road? We had our guys ready to go, they were excited to work on it – and nothing.

Response: Minister Reiter: I can't take responsibility for 35 years. Now it is moving ahead. In the provincial budget process it's necessary to get money allotted. It's our intention to continue. We will inform the communities; it's not possible to do a timeline.

Mayor Fred Roy: *I’m happy 155 has been classified high. Will the classification change to become a primary? Now it’s a secondary.*

Response: Minister Reiter: I will get the deputy minister to sit down and go over that with you.

Drinking Water/Waste Water/Landfills

Deputy Minister Liz Quarshie, Ministry of Environment (Handout)

I commend the team who put the report together. There's a lack of information on the current state of municipal infrastructure, including landfills. There's a lack of local training opportunities. Recommendations of Environmental/Municipal Affairs to address these issues.

Ms. Quarshie spoke about an assessment of regional systems and a site-specific study with PBCN in Pelican Narrows, in collaboration with Creighton. The grant structure is based on the cost of providing core municipal services.

Mayor Bobby Woods: *This has been ongoing for many years. I’ve always said northern Saskatchewan is unique in its ways, traditions and cultures. It’s one of the last frontiers. I’m concerned with how we treat Mother Nature. Landfills contribute to pollution. Drinking water is a concern.*

We cannot afford to manage our landfills the way the policies are set out. We don't have the financial capacity, the education; we don't have user fees. We said yes to regional concept but saw no action. We need to share resources and financial resources. What about individual

communities like Stony? Small communities are still using roadside landfills; if we are serious we must say that is not acceptable. We are willing to work with the department, but the department has to recognize we don't have resources or facilities. Vehicles, appliances, computers – how do we handle those? There's no SARCAN. Demands have been made without too much thought.

Response: DM Quarshie: Re working together on issues (*inaudible comments*) - which issues do you want to prioritize? I welcome the opportunity.

Greg Ross: *Regarding enforcement of the environmental act and our obligations as communities; we will do our best to work with government. Policies are being presented on a monthly basis – layer after layer – is there going to be a timeline, or tolerance that will not require us to find \$1 million right now? Your staff on the ground, the companies – are they in this loop to work with mayor and councils? Must we pay attention to animal control, pollution?*

Response: DM Quarshie: We look at multiple issues and don't assign them – they may not be aware of whole picture. We know waste water management is a huge concern; we know Municipal Services is dealing with part of it. What can we realistically accomplish within a certain timeline – that's where my interest lies.

Mayor Fred McCallum: *I have two issues 1) landfill – we've been dealing with it for the last couple of years. It cost us \$58,000, and we paid for it by selling wood. We could go regional, which would cost us ½ million; if we keep our own, the cost is \$1.2 million. There's no way we can afford that. You have these SERM offices who push their weight. We need more time. The water table is so low we can only go four feet. We need more time and we need financial help - maybe 1/3 1/3 1./3 including feds.*

2) Safe drinking water – I sat on Environmental Impact Monitoring Board . One of the concerns I still have is the water quality in the Saskatchewan and beaver River systems.

Response: DM Quarshie: (*missed part of it including her comments on financial resources*). This government takes water quality very seriously. Incorporate local knowledge. There's no reason why as a ministry we should not be able to monitor water quality in the province and make that available to you.

Response: Minister Harrison: Municipal operating grant section: we will stay at last year's level of \$167 million province-wide. I know there are huge challenges for particularly northern municipalities – they get 3x per capita what southern municipal and cities get. In the next budget year, 2011-12, we will go to the full 1% of PST, which will be a \$60-80-million increase.

Minister Hutchinson took over the chair.

Recreation – TCPS - Scott H

Scott's background is in sport and recreation.

Tourism support: I chatted with folks earlier, and I'd like to clarify how tourism is structured. Our ministry is not direct funding to regions – it goes through Tourism Saskatchewan and out to regions. He explained the Tourism Saskatchewan role. The commitment of government to tourism: we see huge value and opportunity in communities and industry. We are on track to double funding over the next four years. This is one of the best opportunities for the north.

2010-11: key actions will include Métis celebrations and conversations with northern tourism staff. There will be a tourism review over the next while – we have already met with northern region staff.

The final piece is recreation. This is similarly organized to tourism in that we don't do sport and recreation directly; we work through stakeholders such as SPRA, Saskatchewan Sport, Sask Culture, the Arts Board etc. who do daily delivery through a suite of programs.

Recent updates: 1) The lottery dollars run by Sask Sport and Saskatchewan lotteries now have a five-year agreement to help long-term planning. 2) The Minister has made a commitment to physical activity in province and is working with health and education. Last year there was a \$1.7 million physical activity commitment through the Community initiatives Fund, inMotion etc. Infrastructure – The Building Communities program wound down over a year ago. In the last fiscal year, most of the recreational and physical activity infrastructure dollars were in Municipal Affairs, and there is talk of collaboration with federal rink infrastructure dollars. I have heard interest.

Candace Waite – brand new councillor Buffalo Narrows: *Suggest priority allocating more dollars to youth so they have a place to go to keep out of trouble. This could kill several birds with one stone. If we had money to build something they could get off that.*

Response: Scott: I share your view. Sport, Culture and Recreation should be the number one prevention tool – it gives opportunity and purpose.

Terri Lynn Bevereeye: *Councillor; chair Northern Culture Recreational and Sport. My happiest moment was signing the agreement for \$2 million for capital projects. The agreement comes to an end this June. Through area input meetings, we identify the things we need. Will there be more support for capital infrastructure? Also, money was set aside - that \$2 million helped communities to expand skating rinks, provide skis for skiing, etc. Youth from north who have nowhere to go, that's when they find other things to do.*

Response: Scott: Your comments were echoed in the consultation process months back. A lot of other areas were cut off of the \$1 million. Through the rink process several of those needs got addressed; there are other challenges, and 1/3 x 3 doesn't always work. We continue to keep the infrastructure priority on radar screen, but I'm not sure how the priorities will fall out.

Mayor Bobby Woods: *Regarding the school recreation coordinator program, we have to make sure the program is implemented and we have staffing. We have had programs in the north; we need proper training so people know what they're doing. If we got training we would not have problems filling positions and they would have better ideas for youth. Some things are happening in other communities – why can't we have that? We often can but don't know how. We have to build on successes.*

Terri Lynn Bevereeye: *Will you support the lottery to expand programs in the north?*

Response: Scott: The new lottery agreement goes five years now. (*More – inaudible*).

Mayor Andy McKay: *A lot of northern communities have potential for tourism, but lack road infrastructure into our communities. We need that before can promote ourselves.*

Social Services – Minister Donna Harpauer

No formal presentation.

Barb Friesen: *Sled Lake does not have a great need of social housing any more – families have moved away or children are boarded out. We have social housing empty and we would like to sell the houses and allocate that money to communities in need. Some have been empty two years or more, and pests and rodents are moving in. There is financial upkeep and no outside inquiries to ret because of lack of schooling etc in the community.*

Response: Minister Harpauer: We have been monitoring different communities in the same situation and are moving in that direction. We have sold them to the community and they remain in the rental stock – we have taken the money and reinvested it. What about purchase for low income home ownership? In some circumstances we will move housing. I will ask them to look at it.

Frank Petit: Voiced some complaints he had about the ministry, including lack of response to phone calls, employment income reducing social assistance benefits, compensation to families for fostering. He made some allegations, was asked to stick to the agenda. H left the meeting.

Marius Montgrand, Turnor Lake: *If on social assistance are you eligible to make extra dollars? In summer if there's a fire . .*

Response: Minister Harpauer: Yes there is an amount – about \$100 - \$125 – but we are revisiting that. In today's environment we can maybe allow up to \$300. There's pressure from employers to allow that. I can't promise when change will take place. To retain all earnings - it is public money.

Mayor Duane Favel: *In northern Saskatchewan, the extended family is alive and well. In some communities, when social services apprehends kids they place them in foster care, usually in other communities. When extended families invite kids into their families, social services often won't compensate financially. In foster care you pay good amounts. Is that policy being reviewed? It's important they stay in the community.*

Response: Minister Harpauer: We are reviewing the system and we'll make sure we take that into consideration. We do try to find family members as the most healthy solution. It's a matter of stretching dollars. Do we compensate strangers and family and all get a bit less – we must maximize dollars for our kids the best we can.

Mayor Bobby Woods: *Welcomed the Minister. If family members foster a child, would they be entitled to the same compensation as a regular foster home?*

Response: Minister Harpauer: We have number of situations where compensation would be the same. They would have to go through the training and meet the same standards.

Mayor Bobby Woods: *They could be prepared to take on other families. Regarding housing: we used to have a northern housing committee, it went by the wayside. We had advisory and informational sessions. We have had no communication regarding whether they're still in effect for over two years. We should look at that. In the 70s and 80s, houses were built in the north when a lot of people were dependent on social welfare. Section 40 houses. Over time the mortgages amortized. Before that, Sask. Housing was responsible for housing and paid taxes. How many of those houses still exist where taxes have not been paid once the mortgage was paid out. The owners didn't know the system and were still low income. Communities look at tax revenues and they have not collected.*

Response: Minister Harpauer: Are you suggesting Sask Housing is not paying taxes?

BW: People living in were on SA and all payments made on them. After turned over – never paid taxes before.

BH: Once turned over not our responsibility. We will look into it.

Re Marius question: lot of people on SA are able-bodied and healthy – there's work for them to do – they could assist our communities to grow and develop positive lifestyles. Work programs for those SA dollars.

Response: Minister Harpauer: It's a huge public debate. Would be a lot of push-back. We need to have it.

Greg Ross: *We have a municipal development corporation which has worked with a mining company and created up to 47 jobs for 6 weeks in construction and earth moving. Then they go back to welfare and have a serious challenge with the timeline before they get back on welfare. They're having a hesitation because they don't know how long they'll be on the job. Is there a way to work with you to keep any type of opportunity available. We want to use any capacity-building opportunity. This may be disruptive to your policies. If there's no answer, can we start a dialogue? This will grow.*

Response: Minister Harpauer: There's no policy to accommodate that right now.

Are these the type of jobs that could be seasonal and use employment/unemployment?

Greg Ross: As New North and industry keep building that dialogue, that will happen. In the short term, we're competing with contractors. We're just on the entry level right now. I suggest in 3-5 years there may be a sore spot between northern communities and social services. There has to be an answer somewhere – it's getting more and more difficult.

Terri Daniels: *We have a high cost of living. People on social assistance and pensioners, yet the price of goods is based on suppliers. Groceries come in by barge or winter road. Perishables come on a plane at 90 cents a pound. Canned stuff is \$5/can or more; there are no fresh vegetables available in winter. Have you ever looked at the cost of living in the far north vs. social assistance payments?*

Response: Minister Harpauer: Some categories have different rates in the north vs. the south. Rent was one thing – we significantly increased and indexed rents by community. For general living allowance for food and clothing, we're not looking at an immediate increase, but it's always compared to costs in other communities and there is a northern element. I understand a stable income for a family is short in many cases – we will watch closely.

Terri Daniels: *We had 27 people trained on the road, but it's at a standstill and there's no other work, so all are on social assistance. There's concern with the elderly – they have to buy their wood and they're at the mercy of those who can haul wood. Some help out their family members. They can't afford clothing. At the local store you can fit \$100 worth of groceries in a plastic bag.*

Response: Minister Harpauer: We increased the seniors plan by 110%.

Terri Daniels: *That's still less than \$1000.*

Response: Minister Harpauer: The provincial allocation is \$179

Terri Daniels: *That doesn't do it for wood. Treaties are fortunate – they are all paid for medical trips. For elders who are not treaty, it's a very big cost to them to come out and see a doctor in Saskatoon – travel alone is \$1100+, then a hotel, taxis, meals. They can't do it. Is there some way government can provide the travel costs?*

Response: Minister Harpauer: There are programs for travel and health but I don't know . . .

Terri Daniels: *I checked; they cover out of province, out of country. We live in a third world up there and it has to be considered.*

Garry Carriere: *I have done foster parenting – it takes for ever to get certified. I'm not sure how much is spent to train – it's discrimination when you have to train to be a parent. 99% of the time it's an addiction problem where kids are taken away. I'm suggesting we turn those dollars around – you're paying a lot of money. I have a friend taking training, been going three years now, someone's paying for travel. There are always new regulations, we can never achieve the goal. Love is the answer. No-one can teach you how to be a parent. For the best interests of the child – we all know when government took kids away from communities that's not the answer. Keeping kids in communities is the best solution. The amount social services is giving is not enough. Every community is different. Up north we need more assistance. Sometimes can't look at the province as a whole; we have to realize where the community is, and that the further north go, the more costs there are.*

Response: Minister Harpauer: I don't know of any 3-year training program for child welfare. I answer to the public as a whole, so I do have to have standards for foster parents. I would love nothing more than for families to be healthy and whole. The second choice is a relative. I will not take the risk of placing a child where they say all it takes is love. We must have standards, training, accountability.

Garry Carriere: *Use the assistance of other parents in the community.*

Response: Minister Harpauer: I will not back down from mandatory training. I'm dealing with strangers. I have to answer to the province on all of these children.

Garry Carriere: *My wife is used as social services; the officials come once a week for 3-4 hours. Crises usually happen when people are drinking, not during the day. My wife responds to night calls. She can't say no, because they need somebody. Why is there not a permanent worker?*

Response: Minister Harpauer: I wish we could. We're struggling with that. Even in Humboldt there's no worker.

Mayor Bobby Woods: *I know there are positions – we need a hiring retention program. We have regional social services offices, but they are often rushed. They are overworked and overloaded, and it impacts our communities. It would help in communities. I appreciate Gary's frustration. On housing policies: people complain it's difficult to get a house. I stood up for people in our community – young people should have a place to go and we opened up housing. Then they started partying, it became a drug house and we can't get them out. The tenant's association says you can't do this or that. We need the department to review policies in that area. We should be able to evict.*

Mayor Fred McCallum: *When houses are turned over to social assistance clients, where do they get the money for taxes – do they qualify for some help? Some in Green Lake owe a lot of money now.*

Response: Minister Harpauer: There's no assistance, no special category. Clients have to budget accordingly for taxes and utilities.

Mayor Fred McCallum: *Do you explain to them the situation when you turn over the house?*

Response: Minister Harpauer: I will make sure it is communicated by the Saskatchewan Housing Corp.

Mayor Sandra Hansen: *The small settlements and hamlets in the Athabasca Region don't see a social worker. We're lucky if we get one per month, or two. When we do have a crisis, Athabasca Child and Family Services is right next door – but they say they're out of our jurisdiction – they're federal! Why can't you work together and give us funds to service the communities. The issue is ongoing. They come from La Ronge and say there's no time for you guys.*

Response: Minister Harpauer: I don't disagree. We're struggling for workers in the north. There needs to be a tripartite discussion; I would welcome discussions.

Mayor Andy McKay: *To elaborate on Gary's comments: what he says was right, it happens at night. There are people in our community that could deal with crises even on short term, to the benefit of the welfare of the child. If parents are drunks, child needs to go somewhere where there's some control. There are people available that have taken the training; it's time social services tries to use these people.*

Response: Minister Harpauer: We will probably have to look at that alternative. Thanks for having me here today. I read what I sign.

Enterprise Regions – Minister Hutchinson/Doug Howorko

Gary Carriere: *How much money for each region?*

Response: Doug Howorko: explained it.: \$100,000 base money + \$1.25 per camp + \$1.16 per square km + \$100,000 matching. W side \$363,000, EC \$404,000, Athabasca \$313,000. Each region will have a board of directors, with responsibility for hiring a CEO and support staff. For the private sector, we hope ERs will work in partnership with Community Futures organizations and Northern Affairs counselling. They would not support individual feasibility studies. They would provide assistance, guidance, advice, counselling. They are not for loans, financing etc for individual businesses.

Response: Minister Hutchinson: If you want to start a business to service the mining industry and you need help with a feasibility study, turn to e.g. the Clarence Campeau Fund. Enterprise regions do something different.

Gary Carriere: *We have the resources; why can't we become partners? The resources are our equity. People would love to get into the mining business other than what we have out there.*

Response: Minister Hutchinson: Is there an opportunity to work directly with the mining companies? Absolutely. They would say the first thing is to talk to locals. They're passionate, they want to support families and contribute to communities. They always need other things. (Example of Kitsaki Management, who developed a whole suite of businesses to assist mining operations. – trucking, hotel, airline, catering/housekeeping and more).

Gary Carriere: *We get people from outside to do our drilling in Saskatchewan when we have the manpower in the province. Why can't we own the plant and bring opportunities to our local people?*

Response: Minister Hutchinson: Economic regions are trying to make sure they fully understand the economic development opportunities, e.g. mining, commercial fishery – it's their job to keep involved. If I was a gold mining company and I knew there was an ER, I would get in touch with them, sit down with them regarding what they think the opportunities are, what kind of company would work to start with?

Mayor Bobby Woods: We had those boards. There was a lack of understanding on what they represented. I'd like to see a program to educate people in the north so they can figure where they fit in. We need more clarification. Northern Affairs can explain how they are aligned, and what services will Northern Affairs continue to provide?

Response: Doug Howorko: The main role of Northern Affairs will be in communications. One key element is a communication plan. We will ensure the ERs themselves are part of a competitiveness council who will meet together and see where they fit, synergies etc. Northern Affairs has a three-pronged approach: 1) ensure they build a highly effective ER; 2) have a dedicated policies and programs branch; and 3) administer funding of about \$1.1 million. They will provide organizational and development help, will sit ex-officio on the board, and ensure good management practices. They will coordinate inter-ministerial coordination, carry out research, try to assess and monitor performance; and help with socio-economic profiles. Training will be a key component.

They still will have inquiries from businesses. They will help establish new tool kits, continue to offer loans for primary production, plus NDF grants for entrepreneurship, marketing, research and training. They will handle the commercial fish transportation subsidy, and continue to negotiate surface lease agreements. They will be a conduit to other ministries, provincially and federally. They will work with Environment on land use planning, with the feds on Community Futures Corporations, and house the Canada Business Service Centre.

Response: Minister Hutchinson: I hope everyone now understands a bit better. The prime responsibility of ERs is to educate northerners. This will give us a chance to do something we don't do often enough. We have three entities – First Nations, MNS and northern municipalities. The challenge is to work together. They do the same things – so why is it so difficult? There are isolated examples where they worked together really well. I want this to be one of them.

Mayor Andy McKay: *Please explain the matching allocations. How many years is the commitment?*

Response: Doug Howorko: Explained the funding formula. We hope major industry will be a good supporter. There's always a budget process they will be subject to budgets every year.

Response: Minister Hutchinson: This is a startup, with a proposal for ongoing dollars but there are no ironclad guarantees.

Mayor Fred McCallum: *On the northwest side we have an issue. We have a wood supply there we are trying to operate – we've had it for 10 years and it's not going anywhere. How soon will this start? We need help on that issue. We need to look for value-added.*

Another problem we have as mayors – the term is every three years. We have to make sure successful operations are ongoing no matter if the mayors change.

Response: Minister Harrison: Re terms of mayors – what about a four-year term?

Mayor Fred McCallum: The longer the better – it takes three years before things start to change.

Closing Remarks

Minister Harrison.

Thanks to everyone for making the effort, and Mayor Woods for the great effort he put into this. It has been a very productive session. We heard your concerns first-hand. It's important that we look at scheduling our next meeting as early as possible. (June 4 tentatively).

Minister Hutchinson

Thanks for taking the time – close to 100 people who cared enough to come and represent their different points of view. These were really thorough discussions. Points of agreement were reached: we all have homework. We will follow up and get back to you. Pick up the phone and call us. I would echo that Bobby did a tremendous job – sincere thanks to him and all who helped him pull it together. It was a great adventure today – we resolve to do it again.

Chair Bobby Woods

On behalf of New North, the executive and staff, thanks for being here with your assistants who are willing to sit down and listen. Previously we met with just ministers – there were a lot of support staff today and we hope it happens next time too.

Meeting Adjourned.