



CLEAN ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION HEARINGS ON BIPOLE III

PRESENTATION OF John Parenteau

OCTOBER 22, 2012

Good afternoon. My name is John Parenteau. I am the elected Board member for the Manitoba Métis Federation's (MMF) Northwest Region. I currently live in Duck Bay.

The MMF's Northwest Region is one of the most populated regions in the province. We have over 20 MMF Locals in locations such as Camperville, Buck Bay, Minitonas, Roblin, San Clara/Boggy Creek, Shell River, Birch River, Briggs, Ste. Rose and Spence --- just to name a few.

Our Elders, harvesters and citizens have significant concerns about Bipole III, but many of them could not be here today because of travel constraints and the fact that the hearings are only be conducted during the days, which makes it impossible for people with job to attend.

I am here to ask, on behalf of our region, that the Commission come to Swan River or a location close to Swan River for an evening hearing session so our people can tell you first-hand about our community's concerns.

Because of Manitoba Hydro's ill-informed routing choices, our region will be facing even more challenges with respect our harvesting practices. From the damage to Moose Meadows to the loss of valuable blueberry and gathering places, Manitoba Hydro has no idea on the significant impact its choices will have us on the MMF's Northwest Region. Further, it has not worked with us to put any solid plans in place for mitigation.

We are asking the Commission to come to the areas that will be most directly impacted to ensure fairness and accessibility in this public hearing process. I also think it will be helpful for the Commission to actually see Moose Meadows and some of the areas that are going to be damaged by Manitoba Hydro.

Far from being "muskeg" as Manitoba Hydro conveniently describes it, Moose Meadows is a valuable source of moose harvesting in a region that is seeing those opportunities decrease, along with facing increased pressures from other areas.

We promise will be welcoming hosts --- and may teach you how to jig too. We think it would helpful for you to see the land as well as hear how our people continue to use and rely on these areas every day.

If the Commission can't come up to see us, then we will come down to see you in Winnipeg. We will be working with the MMF Home Office to arrange to bring our Elders, harvesters and citizens down to Winnipeg in November in order to present.

We want to make sure the Panel hears from the people that will be affected by Bipole III --- not just from Manitoba Hydro staff and consultants.

I also want to restate, as other MMF presenters have said before me, that Northern Affairs Community Councils do not represent the Métis community in relation to our rights and interests as Métis.

Mayors and Councils are under the control and beholden to the Manitoba Government, and they are not elected or mandated to speak for or represent the Métis community --- in any way.

The Métis people are represented by the MMF based on an objectively verifiable registry, democratic elections and governance structures that ensure Métis represent Métis. The Manitoba Government does not get to decide who represents the Métis --- the Métis people do.

We are also not a part of some "pan-aboriginal communities" created by Manitoba Hydro to suit its own agenda and purpose. While we live in villages, towns and cities with our First Nation relations --- that does not make us one "aboriginal community".

There are First Nation communities, and then there is the Métis community. While we are related and friends, we are distinct peoples and communities. We must be respected and treated as such by governments and agents of the Crown --- Canada's Constitution guarantees that.

I want to read a recent statement from the Supreme Court of Canada on this issue that I think will be helpful for the Commission to keep in mind on why the MMF keeps on raising this issue. In *Cunningham v. Alberta*, the Supreme Court said:

Since their emergence as a distinct people on the Canadian prairies in the 1700s, the Métis have claimed an identity based on non-Indianness. They have persistently distinguished themselves as a people from the other dominant Aboriginal group in their territory - Indians. The obverse side of the struggle of the Métis to preserve their distinct identity and culture is the fear that overlap and confusion with the larger Indian cultures would put their identity and culture at

risk. The right of the Métis to their own non-Indian culture is confirmed by the Constitution Act, 1982, s. 35. Line drawing on this basis, far from being irrational, simply reflects the Constitution and serves the legitimate expectations of the Métis. (emphasis added)

So, the point we – the Métis people – keep raising in not just about aboriginal “politics” at play, and it should not be dismissed as such. The games that the Manitoba Government and Manitoba Hydro continue to play to try to ‘divide and conquer’ the Métis and avoid dealing with our community – as a distinct aboriginal group – undermines the clear promise of Canada’s Constitution to the Métis, and the Commission should care about that.

Quite frankly, Manitoba Hydro is a master at playing this game and it is trying to get the Commission to look the other way and accept its pan-Aboriginal “Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge” study that did not engage the actually rights-bearing aboriginal communities, as represented by the MMF and First Nation governments.

We say this issue is in the Commission’s mandate because you need to consider how this project affects the collectively-held rights of First Nations and the Métis community – not just a few aboriginal and non-aboriginal people Manitoba Hydro has paid some money to in order to conduct a few interviews.

For the MMF’s Northwest region, we want this clearly on the record because Manitoba Hydro is attempting to pass off interviews in our region as interviews with “aboriginal communities”. There are no such things and the Commission should not buy into the misinformation Manitoba Hydro is trying to pass of as Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge.

With that said, I hope that we will see the Commission up in the Swan River area soon, but if not our people will make sure our voices are heard when you resume in Winnipeg.

Thank you.