

**Presentation to Clean Environment Commission
Wuskwatim Hearings by Frank Turner, Executive Director
Swampy Cree Tribal Council
Friday, May 28, 2004**

Mr. Commissioner and ladies and gentlemen of the Clean Environment Commission. My name is Frank Turner and I am the Executive Director of the Swampy Cree Tribal Council. Thank you for arranging the time for me to do a presentation on behalf of the Swampy Cree Tribal Council regarding the Wuskwatim Generating Station Project.

The Swampy Cree Tribal Council is composed of eight member First Nations representing approximately 13,000 people. Our member First Nations include the Marcel Colomb First Nation, Mathais Colomb Cree Nation, Opaskwayak Cree Nation, Mosakahiken Cree Nation, Chemawawin Cree Nation, Grand Rapids First Nation, Sapotaweyak Cree Nation and Wuskwi Sipihk First Nation. Our members and our Tribal Council have worked hard to improve the lives of the larger membership. We have faced many obstacles and frustrations along the way, many of those obstacles and frustrations put in place by Canada, Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro. The Swampy Cree Tribal Council members are no strangers to hydro electric development. With the development of the Grand Rapids Generating Station, significant effects were felt by some of our members such as the Grand Rapids First Nation, Mosakahiken First Nation, Opaskwayak Cree Nation and Chemawawim Cree Nation. With the development of the Laurie River Generating Stations, those impacts were felt by the Mathais Colomb Cree Nation and the Marcel Colomb First Nation. The development of transmission lines has caused impacts which have been felt by all of our members, most notably the Grand Rapids First Nation who lives with the impacts of Bipoles 1 and 2 which cross their reserve lands.

While we recognize that settlement agreements for some of these matters were entered into with Manitoba Hydro, these settlements were limited in scope and we were not offered the same provisions and options which have been extended to other First Nations in the north who are subject to hydro electric developments. The clauses dealing with future development for some of the Northern Flood First Nations were never extended to our First Nations. This is unfair in our eyes and deprives us of being able to engage in the same types of economic development that other First Nations are able to.

The Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation and Manitoba Hydro entered into an Agreement in Principle on September 25, 2001. That AIP deals with the building of the Wuskwatim and Notigi Projects. The fact that Manitoba Hydro is prepared to enter into negotiations with NCN flows directly out of the Northern Flood Agreement and 1996 Comprehensive Implementation Agreement. Manitoba

Hydro is now prepared to offer a limited equity interest to NCN as a result of those agreements and the provisions contained within them.

Even though our member First Nations have been affected by hydro electric development in our territories, no such option is being offered to our communities. We certainly don't begrudge the opportunity being offered to NCN. We do note however, that the transmission line being prepared for the Wuskwatim Project will have an impact on some of our First Nations. We note that it will run from the Wuskwatim Project to the Rall's Island Station located out side of The Pas. At a minimum there will be impacts on both the Mosakahiken Cree Nation and Opsakwayak Cree Nation traditional territories. Yet no offer has been extended to those Swampy Cree Members or other Swampy Cree Members to participate in the benefits of this project. We now hear talk of the development of a new Bipole 3. Recently we have heard that the options of extending Bipole 3 down through the Interlake or along the west side of the province of Manitoba are being considered. If such options are pursued they will have a direct impact on the Swampy Cree Tribal Council Members. And yet there is no consultation with our members and certainly no offers on how they can benefit from these hydro electric projects.

We hear all the talk about training, employment and business opportunities. We doubt that any of those opportunities will be extended to the Swampy Cree Tribal Council and that they will all stay within the NCN membership. We also hear that Manitoba Hydro states they will make contracts subject to their Northern Purchasing Policy. However, we understand that preferential treatment will be given to NCN and we do not believe that Hydro will adequately implement their Northern Purchasing Policy to the benefit of our member First Nations. We view it as unfair that one First Nation is given the opportunity to benefit and so many are ignored and given no opportunity to pursue economic development. This all flies in the face of the fact that other First Nations including the Swampy Cree Tribal Council First Nations have all suffered the effects of hydro electric development in the north. In many cases Swampy Cree Tribal Council members were suffering longer from the effects of hydro electric development than NCN.

It is the position of the Swampy Cree Tribal Council that recommendations from the Clean Environment Commission must go forward which reflect this inequity and provide a resolution to it. As such the Swampy Cree Tribal Council would like the following two recommendations to be included in any final report of the Clean Environment Commission:

1. That other First Nations be allowed to participate in the equity position of the Wuskwatim Generating Project and any other future projects. At present NCN is able to acquire up to 33% interest in the project. Other First Nations must be allowed to participate in the investment in this project. This would provide a greater opportunity for other First Nations and spread the training, employment and business opportunities over a

wider area in the north rather than concentrating it all in NCN. Our member First Nations are prepared to discuss investing in this project but have been prohibited from doing so to date; and

2. We have great concerns over the impact of the transmission line running through our territories. We believe that inadequate environmental assessment has been done as well as inadequate protection measures. We are concerned over the impact regarding trappers as well as those who rely upon wildlife for subsistence. Those trappers will require compensation which must be provided to them quickly and with a minimum of red tape and bureaucracy. Adequate protection must be given to the environment and the development of this project (in particular the transmission lines running through the Swampy Cree Tribal Council area).

I would like to thank you Mr. Chair for giving me the opportunity to do this presentation. I must state for the record however, that the benefits of the Wuskwatim Project must be felt by a wider group of people and cannot be restricted to only one community. I would ask that you include our recommendations in your final report to the Minister. Thank you.