



**Manitoba Keewatinowi  
Okimakanak Inc.**

**A Community-Based Economic  
Action Plan for Northern  
Manitoba First Nations**

**May 26, 2016**

# Federal Government

## 1. Existing Jobs Filled by Members of our Communities

We call upon the Federal government to conduct an inventory of existing jobs in our communities and to identify how many of each occupation are filled with non-First Nation people. We would then work with the Federal government and training institutions to implement a community-based training strategy to ensure our members have access to the jobs. This inventory would focus on airline industry, justice, health care, education, administration, and social services. The inventory can be completed within 6-12 months and an early training strategy can be agreed upon within 6 months after that. In addition to the inventory, information on how many trained northern Indigenous people should be compiled to see where challenges and opportunities are.

## 2. Healthy and Affordable Food

Our families are being devastated by diabetes – a disease practically unknown to Indigenous people only 40 years ago. The fact that diabetes rates have become so high so fast tells us that it's entirely preventable. Garden Hill First Nation, and others, is showing us that a strong local food economy is not only possible, at \$1 million for a dialysis bed, it is practical. But locally grown and raised food is ineligible for Federal Nutrition North Canada subsidies. The vast majority of the incentives go towards high-priced monopoly retailers whose marketing and sales strategies are contributing in making northern First Nation people sick. We call upon the Federal government to subsidize locally grown or raised healthy food and to work with social enterprises to grow their healthy food capacity and to sell imported and local fruit and vegetables conveniently and affordably. And how about every family on social assistance receiving a healthy food box bi-monthly with food (including fish!) supplied by non-profit social enterprises, We can further drive down prices with a produce distribution centre focusing on the needs of the north.

First Nations that responsibly share country foods such as an initiative in South Indian Lake is required. We call upon the both levels of Government to support Hunting, fishing and trapping of country foods including wild game animals, fish and fowl through elder directed programs that will revive food sovereignty among the Nations.

## 3. Diesel fuel to Job-Creating Renewable Options

About \$5 million a year is spent on diesel for space heating in four First Nation communities with MKO. This money creates no local jobs and leaves toxic spills. By some estimates, for every dollar spent on diesel fuel, another dollar will be spent eventually cleaning up the spills. Enough is enough. We call upon the Federal government to join us in setting up and operating a heating utility that would sell heat to customers at or even below dollars that are spent now. This utility will establish renewables such as biomass to heat and geothermal to heat. We would rather pay our own people to collect wood and chip it than to pay refineries, trucking and soil remediation companies.

#### **4. Energy Efficiency in Existing Homes**

There are over 15,000 homes in 63 First Nations in Manitoba. We call upon INAC to work with us to see that any and all energy efficiency opportunities are implemented. This would include allowing First Nations to participate in Manitoba Hydro's Pay as You Save Community Energy Efficiency Program. Right now social assistance rules prohibit participation meaning that INAC would rather pay high bills that create no local jobs rather than low bills where local labour has installed, for example, geothermal. INAC also does not allow First Nations to keep any savings from net bill reductions.

In the spirit of self-government, we also urge the Federal government to work with MKO to establish and then support our own building codes which would include our traditional values. This would mean that INAC should also ensure First Nations can opt in to geothermal in all flood-replacement homes. Similarly, CMHC should insure First Nations can choose job creating, energy saving options such as geothermal when new homes are being built. This costs a bit more upfront but pays for itself quickly and creates lots of local jobs.

#### **5. Trash to Jobs**

Most MKO First Nations have no garbage pick-up, no recycling, no electronics or hazardous waste disposal. Cars are driven up on winter roads and due to lack of parts and services, have a short life span. In some communities, there are 10 derelict cars for every home. We call upon the Federal government to work with us to get these cars shipped south and recycled. This can and should be done in 5 years. We can also follow the example of Curitiba Brazil that cleaned up their garbage problem by paying people bus tokens for people to bring in garbage. However, instead of bus tokens, we would like to exchange electronics, recycling and garbage for healthy food!

#### **6. Home Construction**

Too many of our own homes are built poorly, by outside labour, and using materials from the south. Not only do we need a strategy to increase the number of homes, but a strategy to see local labour to build appropriate housing that will last. We call upon the Federal government to fund a task force that would look into transformative housing options that will meet our needs including creative mortgages, "granny suites", sea container and modular homes.

## **Manitoba Government**

#### **7. Driver's Licensing**

Many jobs are wanting off of First Nations but require driver's licenses to even be considered. By many estimates, 75 percent of job postings require a driver's license but over 90 percent of adults unemployed in our communities do not have a license. Manitoban's near large high schools in the south receive Driver's Education but our young people are left out. We call upon the Provincial government to update Manitoba Public Insurance's mandate in delivering community-based driver's training for all Manitobans (not just high school students in large schools) that includes First Nations. This training needs to include identification collection, flexible fine payment options, convenient practicing and testing options.

**8. Energy Efficiency Creates Jobs**

Aki Energy, a First Nations non-profit, and Manitoba Hydro have done some good work to support now 5 southern First Nations to install their own geothermal energy. We call upon the government also to expand the successful geothermal and biomass work already begun by Aki Energy and Manitoba Hydro in Southern Manitoba to northern First Nations as well.

We agree with the Pallister government that there should be a new efficiency utility to build upon the innovative work started by Hydro. It should have a strong First Nation focus to cut utility bills and to create jobs on First Nations.

**9. Community-Owned Wind and Solar Projects**

We agree that Manitoba Hydro should remain public. However, the Manitoba Hydro Act was written in 1960. As a result, there are no community-sized First Nations owned solar and wind projects in Manitoba (let alone Northern Manitoba!). We call upon the provincial government to review then amend the Hydro Act to include “Feed-In-Tariffs” that would set an acceptable price and provide financing for First Nations owned solar and wind projects (including roof-top!) that are sized to meet our local needs. This is being done elsewhere and can affordably be done here, especially given the steady decline in cost of solar power.

Also, it is illegal for us to retail our own power. In the spirit of self-government, we would like to have the option of setting up our own utility(ies) that produce our own power and sell it within our own communities.

**10. Social Enterprises Work!**

You need a problem solver to solve a problem. Social enterprises are emerging as an important tool. They take the community “orientedness” of a non-profit (or Chief and Council) and combine it with the creativity of the private sector. They also allow for governance participation and partnerships from others including the governments and other well established ventures. It is by being able to tap into this experience and know how that we will obtain solid fiscal management and sound economic ventures. We call upon the new provincial government to endorse, support, and then build upon all 6 pillars in Manitoba’s Social Enterprise Strategy.