

## **10.0 COMMUNITY INTERESTS AND CONCERNS**

### **10.1 Community Consultation**

Community support within Pukatawagan for and interest in the construction of an All-Weather Road is an important/central component of this justification and scoping study.

This is one of the geographic areas of the province not serviced by a system of All-Weather Roads. The absence of roads has imposed costs on individuals, communities and governments in terms of high freight and transportation costs and created other hardships related to a system that is dependent on the weather. The growing size of this community has also made the long-term future of the current system somewhat problematic. Given this, the community position on the road has been rather emphatically in favour. Roads bring fundamental changes. The community and its broader environment become a different place with the advent of a road. Further, roads bring with them the potential for enhanced resource developments. And until recently, First Nation communities have borne the environmental and social costs associated with resource developments but have not participated in the benefits.

To identify the community position, this study process included an initial meeting with Chief Shirley Castel and subsequently a project steering committee meeting in Flin Flon, where Chief Castel, three members of council, and the elders participated in discussion in order to provide information on the study, comment on the study process, and to identify community issues and concerns. The enclosed minutes of this January 15, 2001 meeting at the end of Section 10.0 reflects on those discussions. – **See Minutes**

#### ***Winter Road/Railway Current Transport System Issues***

The comments about the existing winter road/railway transportation system were generally unfavourable. This community loses its non-rail road transportation system at break-up until after freeze-up for seven to nine months each year. In addition to the costs this imposes on the community, the lack of transportation in the late fall months interferes with the commercial fishing industry.

The winter road season is short and unreliable making it difficult to plan major projects. The current railway system service is a high cost, slow, and unpredictable. Consequently, the cost of food and other commercial goods is high, partially due to the fact that stores have to finance and inventory the purchase of their non-perishable items that come in on the winter road. Failure to bring goods in on the winter roads results in extremely high air freight costs. Either way, community members are faced with costs so high that they impact their quality of life. It was noted that the winter road system also imposes inter-community isolation. Travel to other communities, for most of the year, requires either chartering a plane or relying on unpredictable railway schedules. This air travel is prohibitively expensive and has limited the contact

with other communities. The cost of air fare and slowness of rail service also means that visiting children who are away at school and/or other band members living outside of the community is not easily achieved.

A generalized summary of community comments is presented below:

- Winter road season is short and unpredictable (unavailable in some years).
- Rough winter road surface is hard on vehicles
- Rail freight is slow/expensive.
- Very long travel time for rail passengers.
- Air freight and passenger fares are expensive
- Cost of air freight for perishable food items is very expensive
- Health care required outside of community very expensive.

#### ***Issues and Concerns B All-Weather Road***

There are no specific major concerns about an All-Weather Road, however, land use issues, potential social impacts, and impacts on environment were identified as possible concerns.

#### ***Land Use Issues***

- Lack of control over natural resource development
- Loss of traditional lands
- Increased hunting and fishing pressure
- Impacts to traplines
- Social Impact Issues
- Major change to lifestyle
- Concern about drugs and alcohol becoming more accessible.
- Concern about gang development and undesirable elements
- Environmental Impacts
- Water quality and wildlife

#### ***Benefits B All-Weather Road***

The benefits of an All-Weather Road mirrored the comments about the negative aspects of the current transportation system. Specific benefits noted, included the following:

- Reduced cost of living
- Improved diet and better health
- Reduced cost of construction for housing and community infrastructure
- Reduced isolation

- Economic development opportunities
- Reduced cost of transportation
- Opportunities to visit children who are away at school
- Opportunities to visit hospital patients
- Reduced travel times

### ***Natural Resource Development***

Community perspectives on natural resource development are significant because the most important economic spin-off benefits of the road derive from the natural resource sector, particularly forestry, and mining.

A generalized overview of community opinion is one of:

- Support for natural resource development
- Support is conditional on participation and local controls over development
- Substantial planning and consultation is required to give communities reassurances they need about any one project

### ***General Support***

The study team concluded from the Steering Committee community meeting in Flin Flon that there was general support for the road. This general support is characterized as follows:

- Strong support that is somewhat qualified.
- Assurances are needed respecting control over local resources.
- Participation in highway construction and maintenance is important.
- Emphasis on maximizing community benefits.
- Need for in-depth community consultation on specific issues.
- Concern that an All-Weather Road built to provincial highways standards would be too costly and that the project priority would be low.
- Desire to explore all alternatives for reducing road access cost (e.g., single-lane bridges/substandard curvature and grades/seasonal closures/etc.).
- Reluctant consideration of improved rail service (e.g., rail buses/etc.) that did not involve rail line reconstruction.