

NSRWRC Stakeholder Meetings – September 11, 2007 Battleford

Introduction and agenda: (MNP)

Project History (Steve M.)

The former economic development officer for the city of North Battleford became aware of a PFRA report that was conducted in 1971. This report had studied the storage of water in the NSRW basin – at that time the proposal was to build the Highgate dam. That series of studies was never intended to look at economic development or benefit but just to analyze potential water storage sites. In a series of meetings in the summer of '04 it seemed that there was community interest in investigating this, so in Sept. '04 there was a public meeting in North Battleford, chose the name NSRWRC, specifically not Highgate Dam because the NSRWRC wanted to look at several options. A steering committee was formed at this time. Mar -05 first annual meeting and moved forward. Nov '05 submitted a request to the Canada-Saskatchewan water supply program for funding to do this study. Received confirmed in June '06 and had to do some local fundraising because 10% remained to be raised locally. Had no authority to apply levies or taxes, just want to the different levels of government for the donations needed to meet the required 10%. Consulting firm was hired in Dec '06. Feb '07 first round of public meetings to get input. Had hoped the public meetings would have been somewhat earlier, but it was more important to answer the questions that were being raised among the public and the committee and get answers to those questions. Once this series of meetings is over the committee will have to decide what the decision is from here on. That decision has not been made at this point. (At this point the members of the committee who were present introduced themselves.)

Presentation by Golder Assoc.

Questions: (note recording began shortly into the presentation)

What was the maximum water flow after dams (Brazeau Dam and Bighorn Dam)?

Recently around 800 cubic m / second but when there is a big flood it could be more

Is there any distinction between volume of water in the river and cubic metres of flow? Don't understand this, since there is anecdotal information that says that in family photos the water level in the river was significantly above anything that existing in his lifetime. However the figures presented don't appear to say that. Show that the volume of water is just the result of normal fluctuations.

Graph later on shows the changes over 100 yrs

I thought there was 31 cubic metres of water available and now, a few slides later you say there is 3.3 cubic metres available.... what happened?

The large volumes are relevant only if you have storage - that is what is available on average in a year. If you don't have storage, 3.3 is what is available as a result of fluctuations in flow and if you only have a small storage capacity, you could only access 3.3 because of those fluctuations which you don't have the storage to compensate for.

By comparison there are about 100,000 acres under irrigation right now. But the potential is triple at Lake Diefenbaker.

So this maximum would be comparable to what is being irrigated right now from Lake Diefenbaker, and with a large volume of storage, the irrigation potential here would also be triple.

Do the numbers you are using only reflect the values required by law and nothing remaining for nature?

If Alberta used all of its allotted flow and we used all of our allotted flow, then there would only be 25% of the natural flow remaining. However, most of the water allocation is non-consumptive (i.e. it returns to the river after being used).

Do you know what portion of their potential Alberta is using?

Do not have that number available right now. In Southern Alberta the water is heavily allocated, but less so in the North Saskatchewan.

How have you factored in the needs for EB Campbell dam?

The dam in Nipawin has not been factored into this study at this point.

So they would have to shut down the power plant there?

No they would not have to shut down the power plant. They would actually appreciate the additional flow attenuation from an upstream dam.

Would like to change the choice of words in the status quo option. You could spend money in various ways to improve the quality of the river that would be positive actions and the choice of words de-values this and biases thinking around the first option. Would prefer the "enhancement alternative"

It is called status quo and "no investment" because there is no money being invested in it.

Would like something more appropriate than "do nothing"

There was no intention to de-value that option, "do nothing" is a reference to a lack of capital investment..

Would like more enthusiasm in the status quo option. Don't you think there is a major attraction in having a river without a dam? Would like to see the environmental attraction of an un-dammed river as part of the positives.

RE: Off channel storage option

About how many acre feet are the lakes (i.e., the conceptual off-channel storage areas)?

They would store about 8 million cubic metres if there were dykes built around the natural water bodies

Pumping water uphill takes a lot of power – where would that come from?

You would have to build an intake including a pump house and would have to have electrical supply to that pump.

The 50,000 acres that would become irrigable are where?

Undecided but there are some candidate areas that we will show. About 4 of the areas shown would be the 50,000 acres

So this would irrigate ½ of what lake Diefenbaker irrigates?

Yes. For this study we could have shown more, but because there are other uses for water chose to use 50,000 acres for irrigation.

Will this affect pipelines?

Yes pipelines related to the wells shown will be affected as well as other pipelines in the area.

There appears to be some reserve data missing.

The data was current, but there may have been recent changes

Some data in terms of TLE land is not up to date. INAC has an up to date database. In the catchment area there are 9 First Nations within a mile of shore. Biggest issue is on hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering. What considerations are being given to First Nations in terms of the duty to consult? There is an obligation to go to meet with the First Nations and looking at your schedule you have not done that.

At this point there is no project to consult on. Right now we are comparing a range of issues and absolutely that is something that needs to be done for anything to move forward. At this stage we are collecting data and duty to consult with First Nations is an item that has been identified as something that needs to be addressed for moving forward. That is an issue that is important to any project.

Public consultation according to recent law is not enough. You need to write to the First Nation, correspond with them and that has yet to occur.

Scope of work for this was just to look at the cost of the options, there is no project that has been selected.

If you aren't consulting with the First Nations at this point, then why are you consulting with the public. There is a duty to consult that has not been addressed.

When I look at the climate change graph I see a very distinct decrease in the total volume of water of the period of time from 1910 to present. So when you are saying that you use average figures based on that time period, the early years will bias your average. The average should be based on 25 years.

You need a long term average to show changes over time.

However you are basing your projection of the amount of water that is going to be available on an average from a graph with a long term downward trend in the amount of water available. If you are projecting into the future the amount of water you expect to have available 50 years from now, why would you include the figures based on a period that looks that far back.

Availability of water is based on the driest year in those 100 years (for storage). If you didn't have storage, the availability is based on the driest days in those 100 years. The purpose of the chart is to help everyone visualize the types of changes occurring on the North Saskatchewan River.

So what are the factors leading to the changes in this water flow? Human activity is one factor, where are those things measured?

At the border station where water flows are monitored.

So upstream withdrawals from Alberta will be reflected in this, climate change, what else? Melting glaciers?

Yes glaciers are where some of the water comes from.

Review of issues – table:

Who owns the river face and how much of the land is identified as being flooded?

The land under any water body is owned by the province. The water is owned by the province but managed cooperatively by the Federal and Provincial Governments.

The treaties have not covered this.

Yes this is a very complex issue that would require a lot of consultation and may not result in a resolution that allows this project to move ahead.

There are 8 other First Nations that will be impacted – not just Little Thunderchild. It is not just loss of land, but also loss of livelihood. And this will be identified if you choose to engage in the duty to consult.

You are right, that is identified in the full report, but was not included in this brief summary. Land use is a key issue, and we have assessed that in terms of significant to the project in the full report. This would have a high level of impact on the project because of the work required to fully investigate, the work required to consult, and so on. It would not be easily mitigated.

Realistically, there should be others listed on that table as well as Little Thunderchild. 8 other communities should be listed.

Cost Benefit Comparison

So are you saying that the dam option is a 3 billion dollar black hole? Because if that is the case we should all go home?

If you add the estimated costs and subtract them from the estimated benefits the result is a negative approximately \$3 billion

Results of Question and Answer Period

How can I get back my taxpayer share of this \$380K study when it is clear that the study regarding the feasibility of the Highgate dam was drawn from previously known and paid for studies (see '70's study and Meridian study)

We know that the temperatures are rising due to global warming and we know that water evaporates more when it is hotter. We also know that large flat bodies of water, like lakes or reservoirs lose water to evaporation more than narrow faster moving rivers. So any storage site means we'll be losing some volume of water. Is this not true? (If not why not?) Also – rising temperatures and climate change means flows will be changed. Have you investigated how global warming may affect the flow?

It is true that in the future the flows may not be the same as in the past, we did not spend any time trying to predict what flows will be in the future – that is really hard to do. In the case of the Highgate dam there would be evaporation from the lake – would be equal to 1.6 cubic metres per second, which is just under 1% of the water.

Which is about ½ as much as the allocated licenses? And you didn't look at impact of rising temperatures?

No did not consider how much temperature might increase in the future.

Flood/plain ecology: Floods serve important ecological functions (nutrient export to floodplain), Has the negative impact of reduced floods been estimated? Hunting trapping, tourism downstream?

Similar to the other information I presented. That is one of the issues identified. A full impact assessment has not been done. What we have done to this point is identify relative issues to each of the project options. If you are pumping enough water out of the river, you can maintain riparian vegetation and habitat – level of assessment will depend on the particular project. It is an issue that applies to water management projects and will have to be addressed whenever water is taken from the river

You didn't mention the many thousands of tonnes of greenhouse gasses (CO2 and methane) that are released by damming rivers – why was this not mentioned. This is certainly an environmental issue related to dams and some studies show that dams emit as much greenhouse gas as thermal powerplants. Concrete is also very greenhouse gas intensive.

Again, greenhouse gases are identified, clearing of the land underneath the reservoir is one of the mitigations that can be applied. Quantifying CO2 emissions has not been done, it has been identified as an issue related to these projects that would need to be investigated fully in an impact assessment

RE: options 2 and 3 (\$23 million and \$28 million)

Would it be less expensive to pay the relocation costs of would-be irrigators to Lake Diefenbaker or the Rafferty-Alameda sites where the tax-payers of Saskatchewan have bought large amounts of not-utilized irrigation capacity?

If 11,000 acres are available for irrigation now, how much of this is irrigated now, if not all are irrigated now, why expand the potential as such a huge cost?

13,000 acres irrigation is from the off-storage channel module – one area long the river that does not currently have irrigation, there are other areas that do not have irrigation, although there are also some areas that do have irrigation. I don't have the numbers of the amount that is currently irrigated.

You are to be commended for an excellent presentation. Very well researched with thorough coverage of the issues. Good luck for the rest of the evening.

Why all of a sudden do we need to irrigate. Nobody in my area has ever needed to irrigate. Do you know something I don't?

We have some estimates of how irrigation would increase net farm income of course that depends on where you live and the land that you farm among other things. We have some detailed assumptions related to the statistics on the crops that are being grown now in this area, and what might be grown in the case of irrigation.

\$41M estimated cost of irrigation, we all know the government will foot the bill for the farmers.

Why are not the opponents represented here with equal time?

This presentation is not for or against, but to provide information. You can gather information here to use to either support or oppose this project, but everything has to start somewhere, and the purpose of this was to provide information.

Process. I am surprised that a company the caliber of Golder was not able to show us graphs that are readable 100% even from the first row.

Valid criticism. We do apologize for this – we looked at the slides yesterday in our office and we didn't have a screen here (there were supposed to be 2 screens) and the wall area for projection is small, also the lighting is difficult. We apologize, the slides will be made available on the website.

PFRA designed the concept generally, how can a 35 year old design be readable today? So much has changed, 1. dams in Alberta have changed flooded areas, 2. climate change scenarios, etc.

The basis for using the Highate Dam report that was prepared by PFRA in the 70's was as a basis for comparison. What we utilized for this study was the geometry and the location for the dam. They had done the geological study and the geotechnical drilling to chose a site that made sense from the engineering perspective at that time. We used that as a basis for coming up with current costs of the various components. As well the PFRA study did not have a hydro power component so that was added in. The PFRA study was a technical study for the location and a cost estimate. There was no cost benefit analysis, and no consideration of irrigated land and hydropower. To do a study for a new location would have been extremely expensive and was not a realistic way to approach this. The work that was done by PFRA was very good and the geology

definition involved a large amount of time, but the geometry and the basic geotechnical requirements are still valid today.

Who called for this? The Highgate dam would be foolish to build. Non-structural irrigation could happen now, so why all the fanfare about this process. Who asked for it, can this person / group be called upon to pay back all the costs so far including the scoping by Golder, etc?

The study was commissioned by the North Saskatchewan River Water Resource Committee.

Care was taken to list all possible benefits in the cost benefit analysis including the unlikely development of hydroelectricity. Unfortunately that level of care was not taken with identifying costs. For example, no mitigation costs are included for environmental, cultural, social inputs, in addition it must be recognized that some of these "externalities" can NOT be mitigated, why has Golder not made use of the emerging discipline of environmental economics in the cost benefit analysis?

There are these kinds of changes in all of the areas identified and are not included in the cost benefit as it is a fairly traditional cost benefit analysis. This is a relative comparison, and on a relative basis, some of the options may have much greater non-tangibles, there was no intent to put a dollar value on those kinds of things, we took the analysis as we thought it was necessary to help the committee go through the next phase and choose a path forward.

Do you have exact numbers of how much water the oil and gas industry uses? How much will this increase in the next 10 years?

Water licences listed as water uses under industrial water uses includes oil and gas water licenses. It is about 3% of all of the water licensed.

Scoping limits – Golder was not asked to provide costs and benefits of "no flow intervention" options nor was Golder asked to evaluate downstream impacts – this project is incomplete. The proponents need to find more money for Golder to do the complete evaluation they are capable of doing.

Downstream effects are considered in the work that we have been doing – when you look at environmental effects you look at both upstream and downstream effects and those have been taken into consideration in the study.

If you measure the water flow after it is out of Alberta they have already used some of all of their 50%. What is the actual flow of the North Saskatchewan River though Alberta?

Alberta environment is the agency that administers water in Alberta. They keep track of how much they are licensing, everything in Alberta. They also try to calculate natural flow. In the North Saskatchewan River, Alberta uses a relatively small amount, but normally, they try to predict the natural flow so that they can go back and assess usage. In the case of the North Sask, there has been a detailed study to back calculate natural flows, it is in draft form at this point and is not available for our study.

In a cost/benefit analysis of a dam, can you legitimately claim hydroelectricity as a benefit when the electricity has to be used to power the irrigation pumps?

There would be much more power generated than what would be used for irrigation, so there is a net benefit. When we talked to Sask Power about hydro power, they have a list of potential sites that could be developed. Highgate is not at the top of their list, but it is on the list.

They are always looking for more power for the future of Saskatchewan and when we talked to them they would readily accept that power up to the grid and the price of that power would have to be negotiated. The location of the power is relatively good and is not very far away from the main demands. What that means is transmission losses along the power lines are relatively low.

Why are we creating electricity which will be mostly used to control water supply? Why are we fixing something that is not broken.

Similar to the irrigation question above.

SaskPower has publicly stated it is not interested in hydropower development at Highgate. Who else might develop hydro power there?

It is true that this site is not at the top of their list for hydro development sites, but there is potential for power generation at the site and it is worth something if you were to build the site. You would not build a dam there without hydro power because there is a benefit to including hydro power at that site and so it has been included in the study.

If there are possibilities of water shortage why encourage increased water use? Why not encourage reduced water use – we farm on Murray Lake and hold irrigation rights but dryland farm and market garden.

Why aren't we encouraging water conservation instead?

Yes we should encourage water conservation, but that is not what this study is about, conservation is a separate issue that can be promoted in connection with a water management strategy.

Privatization of water is a serious question that deserves to be taken seriously. A greed-based economy has moral implications that need to be a part of genuine public discussion before commercial and bureaucratic interests run roughshod over culture.

The costs of any of these projects need to consider social costs and they weren't addressed directly in this study

It is part of the costs, but not something that we have included so far. I am not here to say that we are perfect and there may be some things that we take away to the committee and talk about filling gaps... such as this

Why is the "state" supposed to pay for all the infrastructure of industry? Why should the tax payers develop opportunities for capitalists? We do our own water development on our farm (where we hold irrigation rights from Murray Lake). We don't see great demand for irrigation here or at the Gardiner Dam.

What is the quality of water in long term storage? We live on Murray Lake and use the water for stock and house hold use, water quality deteriorates dramatically when there is little flow. A stagnant lake presents many problems

With regards to irrigation demand – wasn't part of the study, were to focus on what the potential was, additional work on who would actually use has not been done. We are looking at different storage options, not how the water would be used. Quality of water is impacted by several different factors and has been identified as an issue. Specific changes in water quality such as mercury, CO2 are discussed. Water quality can deteriorate, it does not necessarily deteriorate.

Is there anyone in the room who can speak for the CanSask water supply expansion program, because I am puzzled how a process that appears to have started as dusting off a 35 year old file, can end up with tax payers footing the bill for \$342K and end up with a conclusion that most of the people in the room already knew?

Brian Ireland – Sask Watershed Committee: the NSRWRC applied for funding under the program, the application was reviewed by a committee and it was determined that there was merit in the application on the basis that although engineering work had been done to identify opportunities along the river system some 30 years ago, that the benefits and impacts of such developments were not identified 35+ years ago and the committee felt there was merit in having that type of study done to provide more information to the public on the merit of water storage in the area.

Thanks Golder for great work, have shown that Meridian and now HighGate are not cost effective.

- 1. In terms of recreation have told us the water level will go up and down 10m and thus I am surprised to see any numbers for recreation benefit. Who would build beside a body of water that changes that much?*

Estimates of recreation property development based on what is happening in the area at other lakes and on some lakes that are operated in that manner in Alberta with recreation property on them. Our assumption was that there would be relatively few properties, there would not be house after house lined up along the entire shoreline. There would be fewer properties with relatively good access and close to other communities. So have done an estimate, and it is a relatively small benefit. Assumed 1,000 parcels.

- 2. in terms of hydro as soon as you build a reservoir you start losing a lot of water through evaporation, so 1st thing reservoir will do is cut downstream generation at hydro sites – will you do a net generation number? Because of cuts to generation down stream*

Evaporation losses would be less than 1% of the average flow, a relatively small amount. The accuracy of the flows is less than this and would result in relatively small differences in flows downstream. In between those locations there are many other interactions such as ground water that may reduce that difference. If you were to drop water level on the river you would actually come out with more ground water discharge. It is a very small difference.

- 3. 50,000 acres of irrigation – that is a cost of about 50K-100K per irrigation which is about 50-100times what the land sells for – how can I get those values per acre on my farm? Maybe need to change the way this is calculated – because doesn't look like you have taken everything into account.*

Our on-farm estimated costs for irrigation development were \$1,000 per acre, which is similar to costs in other areas. There are additional costs for pipelines, etc.

Trying to come to grips with the conclusion that less than 1% evaporation is negligible – know a community downstream from EB Campbell dam has been struggling with SaskPower for a small release that was difficult to get – it looks like everyone is clamouring for as much water as they can have along the river – the reality for Cumberland House was a huge struggle for some continuous release. Doesn't jive with calling less than 1% insignificant.

Actually 2 separate things. Amount released from the dam depends on the operating strategy that is developed for that dam – don't know that operating strategy for that dam. If Highgate were built, there would have to be an operating strategy put into place. Our assumption for this evaluation was a release equal to monthly average flows, and that is not necessarily what is being done at EB Campbell

There are 7,000MW of power generated downstream from this dam – if you interfere with water you quickly lose capacity to generate downstream. In some cases your evaporation losses from this dam will lose more water than is required to generate some of this electricity.

Installed capacity is not what is generated on a regular basis. In most cases installed capacity, is often much lower than the amount actually generated. If the calculations were done, there would not be a greater loss downstream than what was generated at this dam. When we asked SaskPower about this potential, they were happy to have it – there was no concern about downstream power generation.

Where do we go from here? The money included a second phase, but that is contingent on a decision of the committee. Assuming that you do proceed to the next stage, the original terms of reference indicated the second stage would focus on the Highgate dam. Those may have been amended, but the original TOR wording focuses on that 4th option. Do you have any flexibility in this – are those TOR set, or can we have benefits from this exercise and the benefits it seems to me would come about if there was a more open approach to what the possibilities are for the care and protection of the North Saskatchewan River (you may call it development). Is that outside of scope? Impossible? Is there any flexibility at all for taxpayer needs to be met?

It is not our decision on what happens in Phase 2 – that is the committee's decision.

I understood that there are other sites that SaskPower would prefer over Highgate – can we learn where they are?

Yes we can, SaskPower maintains a list, I don't have that list, but I believe it is possible to get it.

Why don't you have opponents to this project represented here with equal time?

Stakeholder Comments:

David Orchard – from Borden, 4th generation farmer

I don't want to see that river tampered with. You asked for our reaction to this study and this meeting. My first reaction was why are you holding this meeting in the middle of harvest? Several of my neighbors are interested but are out on their combines. Essentially you are asking us to swallow a \$3 billion boondoggle. A meeting like this was a controlling atmosphere – I was reprimanded for participating and others were because this is a totally one sided thing – you need to have a table for both proponents and opponents, otherwise we are like a bunch of school children and are controlled. As for Golder – you did not take the whole issue – an issue is public opposition to this kind of project. There are more dams being decommissioned in the States than are being built and the main reason for that is because people don't want them to be built. To do a study without taking that into consideration is misrepresenting and is a mis-use of taxpayer information. It was unforgivable with regards to First Nations consultation. There is a duty to consult with the Aboriginal people – not just through public participation but specifically to First Nations people. You are going to run into the law of the land very quickly if you continue down this road for not consulting with that group – in this day and age it is irresponsible. If you are not going to fund 2 tables at this stage, those of us who oppose the process will begin to come together and fund our own table at these types of meetings.

The process was not designed to control, but rather to ensure that there was sufficient time to move through the large volume of information and material that needed to be conveyed

I have the opposite impression. I felt this was quite well managed. I don't like powerpoint presentations, when people read what I have already read much faster, and it was frustrating when there was trouble reading questions. It may have been better if introductions had been made at the very beginning, but it sort of made sense.

I have been involved with last number of years with watershed in a group of communities in the 3 years who have been meeting to try to develop a sustainability plan for water use in the watershed. Some of us have taken an interest in this project from the beginning. A bit disappointed because did attend an earlier public meeting before Phase 1 was underway and at that time made a written proposal that the scope of the project needed to move outside the engineering and look at sustainability in terms of environmental cultural and social aspects and not just get caught up in the costs involved. Those recommendations were posted on the website and arrived here tonight to find that the scope had really remained quite narrow with the cost benefit analysis and haven't really addressed the issues that people in our communities have raised. Social and environmental aspects were largely ignored

Process: was hoping to get a report when I came here and was told there wasn't a written report in the TOR – second best would have been to have the presentations handed out so could make notes on them. Would like to hear from the committee about this – is there not a report that you will make your decision on and is or is that not public?

We made a conscious decision to not make the presentation available in print because wanted people to focus on the presentation and then make it available online.

There are 9 steps to the accommodation side of things – Golder has done a lot of business with First Nations and I am disappointed that weren't further reference to First Nations. Want to relay to you a couple of historical examples. 1. Manitoba – northern Flood agreement. Negative things occurred to First Nations land as a result. 2. Peigan First Nation and Old Man river, 3. Qu-appelle Valley Indian development authority – currently have a specific claim because PFRA took over the dam administration in the mid-40's and didn't consult. Now the government is on the hook. Need to consider what impacts on the lifestyle of the First Nations, this is critical. Water affects hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering and if you don't address those issues. If First Nations are not consulted we will come to you with a proposal to address those issues and if you fail to fund it then you have obviously made a decision to not consult

9 steps to anything that happens on First Nations Land

- 1. provide notice in writing to the First Nation regarding what this is all about – not public consultation*
- 2. have to know the treaty rights*
- 3. have to inform about adverse impacts about any development*
- 4. engage directly – public consultation is not enough*
- 5. solicit concerns seriously and have to consider them*
- 6. deal in good faith*
- 7. look at measures that impact and minimize rights*
- 8. how are you going to have representation*
- 9. ??*

The problem as I understand it goes back to the government – this is the North Saskatchewan River, it flows cross boundary and the responsibility for the water in the river lies in the governments working together. If you can find any precedent or any legislation which empowers the government to give away that responsibility to a body that is not the provincial government I would like to see that. This process abandoned the responsibility for decision making regarding water is inappropriately in the hands of people outside of government.

Committee Comment: (committee comments in italics, questions in regular font)

Thank you for coming, for your input. That is why we have these meetings. We did the best we could, and there were no intended slights, but we have not been through this process before and have not thought of all of the curves that would arise – a learning process and are doing the best we can. We have missed some items, we will likely miss some more. It is not intentional, when we are made aware of them, then we can address them. On we move, in what direction I don't know – that is why there is a committee who will try to make choices and evaluate options. Can not presume what direction we will take at this stage. Thank you for coming, have a safe drive home.

Is there a go-forward plan on Highgate – can you give some indication of when the Committee will tell us their opinion on this.

No – there is not a plan in place at this stage with Highgate, there have been questions that arise tonight and there will be more the next two nights, and there are likely questions we will want Golder to answer before we make a decision.

Golder won't make this decision – who will?

It will be governments larger than the individuals on the committee who decide who makes this decision. The research will be provided to the government, this started as a group of communities that thought it was worth investigating, and the objectives fit the criteria for the funding.

Why is the meeting in the middle of harvest?

This program that we received funding under, requires all monies to be spent by March 31 2008, Starting time was dictated by the funding application. Initially wanted this series of meetings to be completed a month ago, but there was more questions that needed to be answered – Golder would provide information and the Committee returned questions that needed to be answered before we could go to these meetings. Yes this is less than an opportune time, but we are running into restrictions on the end time-line, and we need to get done in time. Unfortunately this was the soonest we could have it and apologize for that.

When Bill and Darrin and Marcie met in Nov 2006 with Committee and made it abundantly clear at that time the need to engage First Nations Communities in this process. When will this begin, what has happened here is unconscionable?

We have tried to make contact with the First Nations, have sent letters, have certainly not excluded them, have requested and have asked. We don't have a proposal to present to anyone. We have a public meeting that we encourage everyone to attend, are you suggesting that we treat one group different? If we do this, we have three meetings going, there are 9 First Nations impacted, we have had problems making contact at this stage, in a perfect world maybe we could meet with one Band Council every second day – 3 more weeks go by.

The meeting I was at, the First nations were told they needed to pay to be involved.

That was in reference to the Membership fee structure of the committee. It would not be realistic to expect non-members to sit at the Board table as voting members. Not one has been excluded from coming to these public meetings.

As we proceed forward, we have heard tonight that it is important to engage First Nations on significant level. The attempt to reach out was made with regards to participation in the organization, not with regards to this study. There will be further efforts to consult in the future.

I don't want to be dealt with as a single person – First Nations people should be dealt with as apolitical entity that you have to recognize. We have different concerns from other groups. We are a political entity, are not single people that want to have their own say for their own people. We have rights that you don't have. We have options to do things differently – don't have to do them one way because they were done like that before.

When I worked for the Churchill River Study, there was a specific public participation sector, people were specifically invited to participate. I have had the feeling at these meetings that we are here because you have to have us here, but you would rather that we all stayed home.

Sorry that you feel that way, but we have tried to make this hospitable and encouraged public attendance.

My First Nation has not been consulted and is not in favour of having a dam at Highgate, none of the 8 reserves are interested.

What do you suggest that we do? Purpose of the study was to gather information about several different options – the first phase and the public input has been based on the process that we are going through and what information is being gathered, not yet on decisions that would be made – that is the path forward that you can take once you have the information you need to talk about the options – then you can engage the public and First nations in that process, but until there is information to talk about, it is difficult to talk about. The purpose to date has just been to get the information so that those conversations can happen.

In the Meridian Dam, the preliminary feasibility stage, it was determined that it would not be necessary to engage the public, but the public stood up and said no. They wanted to be involved from the ground up, and the reason for that is that once the reports get written and if they have been written without that input, it is virtually impossible to get any changes to the documents after they have been written. This way that input is included in the documents that form your feasibility studies.

Get the sense that there is a lot of negative energy in this room. There has been a miscarriage of public administration – we have a river that flows from nearly one end of the country into the Arctic ocean, this is not a bathtub, it is a living thing, but you have local communities and sectors in local communities who have been attracted to this opportunity and don't blame them, but see a negligence of due diligence in the process. The government at all levels has been very silent, and don't understand how that can be when you are talking about a river that connects so many parts of the country. It is because there have been certain powers exercised by certain people – so where do we go from here? Have governments at different levels supporting the process and a miscarriage of public administration – should we not start over and go a new direction and include all the loose pieces and do the due diligence that is required. We ought to start over and one of the ways to do that is for the funders to say we have gone in the wrong direction, let's stop it now and start over.

What should be done? 100 years ago aboriginal people were herded onto reserves and couldn't leave without a pass, our law has moved light years since that and now Aboriginal people have rights and when you ask what you have to do you need to follow the law as laid out by the Supreme courts – and there are processes that you have to follow with these communities that are different for other people. The Supreme Court has told you what you need to do – the funders are remiss unless they are applying the law of the land as well.

Where do we go from here? Golder Associates did their job, they gave us figures and all that stuff. Will the results go to the First Nations people so that the governments and the First Nations people can work on it? That would remove Golder from the picture and allow the three groups to work together.

Golder is continuing to complete Phase 1 – as you can see there are questions that remain to be answered. Phase 2 has not yet begun.