
**Report
to the
Deh Cho Bridge Corporation**

**Proposed Deh Cho Bridge and Community Benefits
Commitment Plan**

Pillars for the Deh Cho Bridge

By:

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Present Situation

This Report is presented to President Michael Vandell and the Board of Directors of the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation. The Report is intended to provide the Board of Directors with an awareness of the concerns and suggestions expressed by the Dene and Metis shareholders of Fort Providence. The primary objective of the Report is to serve as the written synopsis of discussions carried out during the consultation sessions. The Report is also intended to provide recommendations for improving the Community Benefit Commitment Plan.

Community

The community of Fort Providence is situated approximately 12 km west of the Ferry Crossing on the north shore of the Deh Cho. A majority of the residents of Fort Providence are Dene and Metis shareholders of the proposed Deh Cho Bridge. The Deh Cho Bridge Corporation is proposing to design, finance, construct, and then own and operate the Deh Cho Bridge. The distinctive feature of the community is the strength of culture and connection to the past. People hunt, fish and trap to supplement their family incomes. A common challenge of community leaders is high unemployment rates and moderate skills of its workforce. A few people have full-time jobs with the existence of small service based businesses. The residents of Fort Providence have a sense of togetherness and that we are in it together.

Project scope

The author was retained by the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation in December 2003 to:

- Become familiar with the proposed Deh Cho Bridge Project in general and Community Benefits Commitment Plan,
- Arrange formal and informal meetings to explain the project in general and the Community Benefits Commitment Plan and to hear the community concerns and suggestions for improving the plan,
- Write a brief written synopsis of discussions, noting key concerns and suggestions,
- Provide recommendations for improving the Community Benefits Plan and for responding to concerns noted.

Methodology

The author read and reviewed information regarding the proposed Deh Cho Bridge and Community Benefits Commitment Plan, conducted meetings with individuals and groups to explain and inform the proposed Deh Cho Bridge Project and Community Benefits Commitment Plan. A Public Information Session was also held. A power point presentation was developed based on previous informational materials and used for presentation to the youth, Interagency Action Group, and for the Public Information Session.

Meeting Summaries

Public Information Session

A public information session was held on Tuesday, February 10, 2004 and 10 people attended the presentation and following discussion period.

Generally the public comments surrounded the interests of business opportunity. Members suggested the development of a list of opportunities for construction purposes so that shareholders or residents of the community could access the opportunities. Emphasis was put on the need for capacity for both human and financial resources and joint ventures. There was a question of the status of support or non-support for the proposed bridge. It was also suggested that a strong statement be made from the community regarding the proposed bridge project.

CONCERNS	SUGGESTIONS
<p>Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are people supporting or not supporting bridge? <p>Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Impacts to fish and their habitat ➤ How will bison/animals be kept off bridge? 	<p>Business Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Make available a list of opportunities for construction purposes <p>Operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ There should be a strong statement on the bridge from the community ➤ More schematics, illustrations, for presentations to show, board management of finances.

Meeting Summaries

Interagency Action Group

I met with the Interagency Action Group on February 4 at the Friendship Center. President Michael Vandell also attended and assisted with the power point presentation and participated in the following discussions.

The members of the Interagency Action Group expressed strong concerns about the social impacts during the construction of the proposed bridge. It was emphasized that social and healthcare workers are already working to the maximum capacity. The bridge would only exacerbate the stress on the system. A member expressed a concern that the community and people are not ready for development. The community already has existing social problems of child neglect, alcohol and drug abuse, loss of culture and language. Members of the group expressed urgent concerns including the issue of child neglect, parental skills, and people coping with post traumatic stress. The Interagency Action Group also offered suggestions to improve the Community Benefits Commitment Plan. Of particular interests is the Interagency Action Group call for leaders to act now! Further, that the Community Mobilization be considered by leaders to assist in training and developing preparatory functions. Further suggestions included the need for personal financial management training, need for psychologists, need to deal with issues rather than symptoms, and that money should also be directed towards cultural development.

CONCERNS	SUGGESTIONS
<p>Operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Money cause of delay? ➤ Chamber of Mines ➤ Volume of transportation 	<p>Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We need to act now ➤ A picture of what the social impacts will be ➤ The use of Community Mobilization to assist in training
<p>Social Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We are not ready for development ➤ Need to teach parents to parent ➤ Awareness of Bingo and child neglect ➤ People dealing with post-traumatic stress ➤ Boom and bust scenario like Fort Liard? 	<p>Social Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Need for personal financial management training ➤ Need psychologists ➤ Need to deal with issues rather than symptoms ➤ Money towards cultural development

Meeting Summaries

Youth

I met with the Junior High, Senior High Class, and the Transition Class on February 3 and 4 at Deh Gah Elementary and Secondary school. President Michael Vandell and Chief Operating Officer Albert Lafferty accompanied me upon my invitation during the Senior High and Transition Class presentation. Both were unavailable for the facilitated discussion with the youth of the following day. A power point presentation was used.

The youth were very interested in the proposed bridge, particularly the design, costs and operations. A suggestion was made of whether the bridge will be officially named. The youth expressed concerns about the ability of the bridge to endure an ice break-up and the impact on fish habitat. The youth also provided suggestions for the Community Benefits Commitment Plan. Suggestions include economic ventures, including the establishment of a 24 hour gas station and a Mall. Suggestions for social development include, artificial ice for the arena, more spending for physical recreation facilities, and establishing an ambulance services. Of particular interests is the suggestion that rather than use mobile trailers for the camps for construction workers that houses be built for the workers instead. After the completion of the bridge then the houses could be available for residents of Fort Providence.

CONCERNS	SUGGESTIONS
<p>Design, costs, operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What site will the bridge be built at? ➤ How high will be the bridge? ➤ How much will it costs to build? ➤ What will happen to ferry employees once bridge is completed and in operation? ➤ How will tolls be collected? ➤ How will the bridge be affected by the ice break-up and the currents of the water? ➤ What will happen to the fish? 	<p>Board Operations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Is there a name for the bridge? <p>Economic</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Establish a 24 hour gas station ➤ Establish a mall ➤ Instead of camps, have houses then make available to community after bridge is complete <p>Social Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Establish artificial ice for arena ➤ Spend more towards physical recreation facilities ➤ Establish ambulance services/ paramedics for community and highway service

Meeting Summaries

Elders

I met with individual elders before Christmas and as a group through the Elders' Council on February 5. All discussions were conducted in Dene Zhatie. President Michael Vandell attended the Elders meeting along with Chief Berna Landry.

Elders generally took an interest in the Community Benefits Commitment Plan, particularly social development and employment and training. Elders provided suggestions for the Community Benefits Commitment Plan including the call to leaders to begin training programs to prepare the workforce. Elders also expressed concerns regarding leadership, respecting operational policies and the required capacity to undertake such a project as the proposed bridge. Is the present leadership able to take on the project? What will ensure that Board of Directors do not find themselves in a conflict of interest? This was emphasized for the time when contracts are awarded and whether personal relationships or business interests may cause a conflict of interest on the part of the Board. Another concern was also expressed regarding the ownership structure and profit share between the Dene and Metis. The Elders state Dene are the majority and should hold majority shares in the ownership of the bridge and profits. The elders also clearly expressed that support and approval of the proposed bridge project would have to ultimately be given by all the membership of both the Dene and Metis organizations.

CONCERNS	SUGGESTIONS
Leadership and operational guidelines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Conflict of interests ➤ Lack of transparency ➤ Does leadership have the capacity to deal with the bridge? 	Public Relations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Home visits should be done to explain and inform people
Shareholder Profits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Taxation of revenues, profits? ➤ Concern about dividend payments 	Shareholder Profits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Research dividend payments ➤ Trust Fund is good for youth
Shareholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Dene and Metis ownership structure. Dene should have 90 %. ➤ Non-resident beneficiaries. Will they also hold an interest? 	
Employment and Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Saw boats on river with no locals. Should not happen again. ➤ Leaders need to ensure employment quotas met and maintained 	Employment and Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Send young people out for training now
Social Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Need to strengthen traditional practices 	Social Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Programs should be developed for alcohol and drugs, youth, culture, recreation

Recommendations to respond to concerns

Generally, the common concerns expressed are viewed with the presumption that shareholders and residents of the community are expected to take ownership of the proposal and support the proposed bridge and Community Benefits Commitment Plan. In this instance, the process is to seek feed back from the shareholders and public, input comments into the system, and report the shareholders and public to verify and address their concerns and suggestions.

Social Development

RECOMMENDATIONS	SOCIAL CONCERNS
<p>1. That the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation establish a working relationship with the Interagency Action Group to discuss and address the concerns expressed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Designating a Board of Director as liaison to social agencies b. Undertaking focus group discussions on social concerns and approaches to address them c. Build upon the strengths of the community, culture and language 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ We are not ready for development ➤ Need to teach parents to parent ➤ Awareness of Bingos and child neglect ➤ People dealing with post traumatic stress ➤ Boom and bust scenario ➤ Need to strengthen traditional practices

Employment and Training

RECOMMENDATIONS	EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING
<p>2. That the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation immediately identifies employment and training opportunities associated with the bridge and begin implementing programs by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Identifying programs and partners to immediately implement preparation work to train a workforce for the proposed bridge construction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Saw boats on the river with no local shareholders being employed ➤ Leaders need to uphold employment quotas of local residents

Process/ Operations

RECOMMENDATIONS	OPERATIONS/ PROCESS
<p>3. That the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation reflect upon the process to seek support and approval for the proposed bridge project and ensure its operations are guided by clear and transparent policies by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Ensuring a local consultation process is clearly defined in seeking support and approval for the proposed bridge and community benefits plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are people supporting or not supporting bridge? ➤ Money cause of bridge delay? ➤ How will tolls be collected? ➤ Conflict of interests ➤ Lack of transparency ➤ Does leadership have the capacity to take on the bridge project

Recommendations to respond to concerns

Environment

RECOMMENDATIONS	ENVIRONMENT
<p>4. That the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation clearly outline the impacts to the environment, respecting water and fish habitat, by illustrating the impacts of the ferry and ice bridge and proposed bridge by:</p> <p>a) Comparative illustration of present impacts/ benefits to ferry and ice bridge operations versus proposed bridge</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Impacts to fish and habitat ➤ How will animals be kept off bridge?

Shareholder Profit and Structure

RECOMMENDATIONS	SHAREHOLDER PROFIT/ STRUCTURE
<p>5. That the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation be aware and immediately address the concerns regarding shareholder structure and profits between the Dene and Metis by:</p> <p>a) Ensuring that an equitable and amicable share ownership structure be in place for ratification by the Dene and Metis membership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Will revenues and profits from Community Benefits and Bridge be subject to taxation? ➤ Concern about dividend payments ➤ Dene and Metis ownership structure ➤ Non-resident beneficiaries and whether they will access benefits

Bridge Design

RECOMMENDATIONS	BRIDGE DESIGN
<p>6. That the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation take opportunity to raise the profile of the design of the bridge by creating a bridge model for public display</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How high/ big will the bridge be? ➤ What site will be bridge be built at? ➤ How wide will the bridge be? ➤ Will the bridge have a name?

Recommendations to improve Community Benefits Plan

The Deh Cho Bridge Corporation expects the community to take ownership of the proposed Deh Cho Bridge and Community Benefits Commitment Plan.

What is a Community Benefits Plan? The intention of the Community Benefits Commitment Plan is to ensure that the impacts and benefits of the proposed bridge project bring immediate, short-term, and long term benefits to the community and that there are measures in place to address the anticipated impacts. A similar concept is that of Impact Benefit Agreements (IBA's) that are realized between an impacted community and a development proponent, commonly a Diamond Mine in this instance. Particular interests is given to the status of the Community Benefits Plan. Is this an unprecedented and new way of preparing for development scenarios? If this is the case then Fort Providence would serve as a model for future Community Benefits Plan and hence the need to do things the right way the first time around. Following are the recommendations to improve the Community Benefits Commitment Plan:

Process

- 1. That the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation, including local leaders, commit to support a team of leaders to seek local support and approvals for the bridge project and prepare a community mobilization strategy by:**
 - ✓ Assessing the strategic needs for leadership capacity and identify the necessary local resources to undertake the proposed bridge project
 - ✓ Establishing a mandate and framework for the leadership team to carry out the functions to implement the Deh Cho Bridge and Community Benefits Plan
- 2. That the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation ensure there is a well-defined local process of decision-making for building a bridge and Community Benefits Plan, for ultimate approval and consent by:**
 - ✓ Ensuring that shareholders and residents understand their role in taking ownership for the bridge and Community Benefits Commitment Plan
 - ✓ Approaching the Community Benefits Plan in stages with periodic support milestones and approvals
- 3. That the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation fully establish their office and supporting personnel so that a public presence is felt for command and control of the proposed project, by:**
 - ✓ Identifying and securing the resources to hire local staff
 - ✓ Fulfilling an established office with key personnel
- 4. That the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation maintain their key operations and decision-making at the community level by:**
 - ✓ Ensuring there is a clear and transparent process involving the input and support of the shareholders of the community
 - ✓ Ensuring that shareholders take ownership of the proposed bridge and Community Benefit Plan so that they in turn provide support and approval

Recommendations to improve Community Benefits Plan

Elements

1. **That the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation acknowledge the concerns and suggestions expressed and are incorporated in decision-making to address key issues and make improvements to the Community Benefits Plan by:**
 - ✓ Clarifying its consultation process of informing, feedback, and ways of incorporating these kinds of concerns and suggestions
 - ✓ Reviewing the concerns and suggestions outlined in this report
 - ✓ Analyzing the concerns and suggestions to prepare a response in a public forum
 - ✓ Adopting the concerns and suggestions by way of a motion to ensure they are addressed and followed-up
2. **That the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation reflect upon the Community Benefits Plan to ensure that it is consistent with local Dene-Metis Principles, including the principles of lands and resources, jurisdiction and access of traditional lands, and the values of a collectiveness and sharing, by**
 - ✓ Seeking opinions of First Nations regarding Development Principles
 - ✓ Seeking regional, territorial, and national opinion regarding Treaty Rights and Aboriginal Title respecting commercial business infrastructure projects within First Nations' jurisdictions relating to taxation issues and access
 - ✓ Ensuring each major decision in the stages of support and approvals are consistent with local principles and values
3. **That the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation understand the concept and significance of the Community Benefits Plan with regard to precedence and application for other First Nations, and to ensure maximum local benefits, by:**
 - ✓ Reviewing a comparative analysis between Benefit Plans and IBA's
 - ✓ Verifying the unique process it has undertaken at this level
 - ✓ Examining the fundamental needs of individuals, families, agencies, groups, organizations, and the community

Conclusions

The proposed Deh Cho Bridge, the construction and operation, and the associated Community Benefits Plan, is about change. The proposed bridge is looked upon by local leaders as an opportunity to make life better for the community, a convenience for residents north of the community and travelers including the trucking industry. There will be short and long term benefits during the construction and operation of the proposed Deh Cho Bridge. For those reasons, shareholders and residents of the community are expected to support the project on those merits.

In assessing the concerns and suggestions expressed, it is evident that residents are concerned about the social impacts of the bridge. Already Mental health and Health care workers are strained by existing problems within the community. The Interagency Action Group have made recommendations to make improvements to the Community Benefits Plan and mitigating the social impacts. The community is at a juncture, whether to remain on the present course or embrace the project as a symbol of opportunity.

People could support the proposed bridge project if they knew their role within the process of decision-making. People are reassured that there will be a ratification process but what that means, when, and how it will happen is not clear. In some instances people support the proposed bridge project in principle but reserve their right to withhold their ultimate approval and consent. For the most part people realize that the bridge is only being pushed by a few leaders and does not reflect the wishes and desires of all the people.

One common tendency is the anxiety brought on by potential change and the preference to maintain the status quo. Why should we even fathom the idea of building a bridge let alone own it? Generally it is expected that some form of resistance to change will prevail. But most important is the reluctance of shareholders to take ownership of the concepts and processes regarding the proposed bridge and Community Benefits Plan. Why aren't a majority of shareholders supporting the proposed project and Community Benefits Plan? It is evident that shareholders have not been in the loop to enable them to support and formulate direction for the leadership of the Deh Cho Bridge Corporation. The impression seems to be that there is too much reliance on the consultants and officials out of Yellowknife. Finally there seems to be the question of leadership capacity, whether leaders are able to manage the project successfully, from start to finish. Whether this is a matter of integrity or the lack of confidence of leaders, the issue could be critical in carrying the process through the current delay and final approval stage. A well thought out public information strategy will assist in ensuring support is gauged favorably.

Nadli & Associates view the proposed bridge project as an opportunity. While most Deh Cho communities hope for some form of oil and gas/ resource development, Fort Providence is geographically located in a low potential zone for significant hydrocarbon or mineral findings. So then what would the community do to sustain its people and workforce if there is a low potential of tapping into the oil and gas industry? Build a bridge and create a revenue stream for 35 years. Local leaders have been proactive and stellar in managing to take a very business minded approach. There is a need to maintain a holistic approach, ensuring that not only profits and revenues are created but that there is a socio-economic balance. More importantly that the shareholders become part of the process, to support and approve the proposed project. In this respect, the pace of the community must be strongly considered.

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Meeting Summaries of concerns and suggestions

Public Info' session:

- For businesses, make available list of opportunities for construction purposes
- More schematics and illustrations for presentations. I.e.: board management of finances
- What are people saying, support or non-support for proposed bridge?
- Impact to fish from Ferry and ice bridge
- Control bison to keep off bridge by installing Texas gates
- There should be a strong statement from community on the bridge

Interagency Action Group:

- DCBC considered using Community Mobilization?
- Fish species,
- Volume of transportation
- Delay, money not cause of delay?
- Chamber of mines
- Can we get a picture of what social impacts will be? I.e.: Fort Liard.
- Boom and bust in Ft Liard and anger of no jobs/ opportunities
- Bingo, child neglect, awareness should be happening
- Need to teach parents to parent
- Money towards cultural development
- Need to deal with issues rather than symptoms
- Need for personal financial management training
- Need for psychologists
- Post traumatic stress that people are dealing with
- We are not ready for development project
- We need to act now

Meeting Summaries of concerns and suggestions

Youth:

- What will happen to ferry employees?
- How will tolls be collected?
- Where will the bridge go in? How high will the bridge be?
- How much will it cost?
- 24 hour gas station
- Artificial ice
- Mall
- Physical recreation facilities
- Name for bridge
- Instead of mobile trailer construction camps use houses
- Paramedics/ ambulance services

Elders:

- Policies and procedures should be in place to avoid conflict of interests of Board of Director
- Need for transparency and openness, financial management accountability and decision-making
- Dene and Metis role in bridge revenues and community
- Taxation of revenues?
- Dividend payments
- Fish Study and observed that no locals hired
- Non-resident beneficiaries, how will be dealt with
- For the youth a trust fund
- Need for programs, A& D, youth, culture, youth recreation
- Involvement of Metis in the project, role in community
- Ultimate consent must be given by membership
- Would not prefer dividend payments
- Young people are educated and ready enough to take on this project
- Need to strengthen traditional practices
- Send young people for training
- Home visits should be done
- Leaders need to ensure employment quotas are met and maintained