

Trip Report Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC)  
April 22-24  
Directors Hiebert and White

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The NADC is an Alberta funded organization which promotes the economic development of the north as well as being advocate for Northern communities by bringing their local issues to the provincial government. The conference was made up of several key note speakers, notably Premier Ed Stelmach, as well as an economist Mr. Hirsch from the U of Calgary, an environmentalist Dr. Mehta from U of Winnipeg and Dr. Freidman an internationally known town planner. All were excellent speakers which made us think and reflect on our decision making process. If we could sum up what they all had to say in two phrases they would be "in order to predict the future, create it" and "remember, we are commas in history"

We were also involved in group sessions to analyze and discuss how to plan for two potential scenarios in our economy, a red hot one and a dead one. It was very evident that there is little difference in Northern Alberta's situation and ours in the Peace.

What can be brought back from these discussions to our board for reflection are the following notes:

- (a) long term planning and vision (up to 50 years) is needed;
- (b) we need to recognize that there are consequences to our actions and a need to shift focus from making money to important aspects such as the environment and social values;
- (c) absence of an integrated plan leaves us vulnerable to inevitable change and weakens our ability to stay flexible and organized. Our actions become reactive;
- (d) strong local government and provincial leadership that engages our citizens so they may take responsibility for their communities and society without always relying on government;
- (e) communities are playing catch up on old infrastructure and yet there is still a pressure to build new. Infrastructure attracts people. Funding should not be based on population and needs to move away from per capita funding;
- (f) risks are complacency, unsustainable development and environmental damage;
- (g) education and training should be a priority; and
- (h) move away from large scale power generation projects.

Dr. Friedman stated there are four items to consider when planning - economy, social and cultural needs and the environment. We are designing our cities for the automobile which encourages inactivity in our population and we must consider trails as not only being for recreation but a second means of transportation. The subdivision vs community concept creates elements that divide rather than pull us together. We need gathering places that encourage people to interact. He sited Stoney Plain development as a good example.

Before making a decision three questions need to be answered: (1) does the decision move to sustainability? (2) is the decision flexible and can be changed or will you be trapped? (3) is there a reasonable return on investment?

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