

**Manitoba Wildlands**

**2011 Provincial Election Questionnaire #4 – East Side Region**

Thanks for your questions on Manitoba's East Side.

The NDP has a strong record of working with communities along the East Side to move forward with traditional land use planning. This includes local efforts to protect traditional territory while promoting the area for international recognition.

Since 2000 we have been working with local communities and chiefs who had requested greater say over their traditional areas on the East Side of Lake Winnipeg. Over 80 community meetings with east-side residents were held on the subject of how their traditional lands should be governed and how a broad area plan should be put in place. This process led to the report *Promises To Keep*, which made recommendations ranging from the protection of traditional lands to transportation, sustainable economic development and employment and training opportunities.

During the 2007 provincial election, we made a commitment to move forward to protect the East Side of Lake Winnipeg by legislating a new protected area designation, which would allow East Side First Nations to create and implement their land-use plans and ensure the area is protected in a way that is consistent with the establishment of a potential UNESCO World Heritage Site in this area. Existing legislative tools simply did not meet the needs of First Nations communities. In 2008, we acted on our commitment by introducing the East Side Traditional Lands Planning and Special Protected Areas Act. This first-of-its-kind in Canada legislation ensures any new development in a traditional land-use area be conducted in collaboration with First Nations and be consistent with the land-use plan. First Nations themselves may determine whether they apply for designation under this Act. The legislation was strengthened after its introduction based on requests from First Nations aimed at ensuring a government-to-government relationship regarding land protection and planning under the act.

In October 2010 Poplar River, Pauingassi and Bloodvein River First Nations formally requested planning area designations within their respective traditional land-use areas under the Act. In June, the province legally designated over 800,000 hectares of boreal forest and wetlands on the East Side as protected traditional territory, by bringing into law the management plan developed by Poplar River First Nation. Their plan incorporates traditional knowledge, elders' oral histories, traditional land and resource uses, and mapping and scientific data relating to climate, geology, vegetation, fish and wildlife. Aboriginal access to hunting, fishing, trapping and other traditional pursuits in the area are respected and continued. Education programs, ecotourism and interpretive and cultural programming are also part of the plan.

We will continue to work with communities on the East Side of Lake Winnipeg to protect their traditional territories. It is disappointing that Hugh McFadyen continues to want to ram a major transmission line through this area, which would tie Manitoba up in years of legal challenges by environmental groups and lobbyists. If he has his way, our Boreal forest will be gone and we'll never get it back.