

I AM STRATER CROWFOOT. THANK YOU FOR HAVING ME HERE TODAY. I AM THE FORMER HEAD OF INDIAN OIL AND GAS CANADA, AN AGENCY CHARGED WITH ADMINISTERING THE OIL AND GAS WEALTH OF FIRST NATIONS ACROSS THE COUNTRY. I AM CURRENTLY THE VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE INDIAN TAXATION ADVISORY BOARD. THIS IS AN AGENCY WHICH REGULATES FIRST NATION PROPERTY TAX SYSTEMS ACROSS THE COUNTRY. I HAVE TWICE BEEN THE CHIEF OF THE SIKSIKA FIRST NATION, THE SECOND LARGEST FIRST NATION IN THE COUNTRY. WE ARE LOCATED JUST OUTSIDE CALGARY AND HAVE SIGNIFICANT DEPOSITS OF OIL AND GAS.

I THINK WE ALL KNOW WHY I AM TALKING TO YOU TODAY. I AM SOMEONE WHO IS FAMILIAR WITH THE ECONOMIC INTERESTS OF FIRST NATIONS AND PARTICULARLY AS THEY RELATE TO NATURAL RESOURCE PROJECTS.

TODAY, I'M GOING TO PROVIDE SOME INSIGHT INTO JUST WHAT FIRST NATIONS EXPECT WITH RESPECT TO MAJOR RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS ON OUR TRADITIONAL TERRITORIES. I THINK WE ALL KNOW THAT THE DELGAMUUKW DECISION OF THE SUPREME COURT CONFIRMED THAT FIRST NATIONS IN CANADA RETAIN AN UNDERLYING ABORIGINAL TITLE TO ALL THEIR TRADITIONAL TERRITORIES. THE SUPREME COURT CONFIRMED THAT THIS WAS AN ECONOMIC INTEREST. AS A RESULT OF THIS DECISION, PARTIES TO A RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT HAVE A DUTY TO "CONSULT" WITH THE FIRST NATION ON WHOSE TRADITIONAL TERRITORY THIS PROJECT TAKES PLACE.

I THINK IT IS ALSO NO SECRET THAT OUR RESOURCES ARE IN DEMAND NOW AS NEVER BEFORE. THE WORLD IS THIRSTY FOR OUR ENERGY RESOURCES. CHINA IS BUILDING ITS BASIC PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND THEY ARE DEMANDING BASIC NATURAL RESOURCES ON A SCALE THAT WE HAVEN'T SEEN IN NORTH AMERICA FOR MANY, MANY YEARS. THEY ARE LOOKING TO CANADA FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS. WE HAVE AN INCREDIBLE RESOURCE ENDOWMENT. WE HAVE A STABLE GOVERNMENT THAT ENSURES STABLE SUPPLY. WE ARE JUST ACROSS THE OCEAN WITH A TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE THAT IS READY TO SUPPLY THEM.

THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CANADA ARE AS BRIGHT AS THEY HAVE EVER BEEN. I THINK IN THE MINDS OF SOME THE ONLY THING STANDING IN OUR WAY IS THIS ISSUE CALLED DELGAMUUKW.

WELL LET ME PROVIDE YOU WITH SOME REASSURANCE. MOST FIRST NATIONS HAVE NO INTENTION OF STANDING IN THE WAY.

THE FIRST KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE ABORIGINAL INTEREST IN THE LAND IS TO UNDERSTAND THAT FIRST NATIONS ULTIMATELY WANT THE SAME THING AS EVERYONE ELSE. WE WANT BUSINESS AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES ON OUR LANDS. WE WANT REVENUES THAT HELP US BUILD INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROVIDE BETTER QUALITY SERVICES THAT HELP OUR PEOPLE. IN FACT, IF ANYTHING WE WANT THESE THINGS MORE THAN OTHER CANADIANS BECAUSE THEY ARE PRECISELY WHAT WE ARE MISSING NOW.

AND OF COURSE WE WANT TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT WE LIVE IN. WE WANT TO PROTECT SITES THAT ARE SACRED TO OUR PEOPLE. WE WANT TO ENSURE THAT NEW DEVELOPMENTS DO NOT THREATEN OUR TRADITIONAL WAY OF LIFE.

BUT THE BOTTOM LINE IS THAT MOST FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE RECOGNIZE THAT LARGE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS CAN BRING LARGE ECONOMIC BENEFITS. THEY CAN HELP THEM REALIZE THEIR BASIC DREAMS: JOBS, HOUSES AND A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE.

MOST FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE WOULD PREFER THAT THESE BENEFITS COME SOONER RATHER THAN LATER IF OUR OTHER INTERESTS, SUCH AS PROTECTION OF THE LAND AND TRADITIONAL SITES IS TAKEN CARE OF. MOST FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE DO NOT SEE CONSULTATION AS AN END IN ITSELF. THERE ARE SOME EXCEPTIONS. HOWEVER, TO ME CONSULTATION IS JUST THE MEANS BY WHICH WE SECURE OUR SHARE OF THESE BENEFITS. IT IS THE MEANS BY WHICH WE IDENTIFY THE IMPACTS OF A PROJECT ON SACRED SITES AND TRADITIONAL WAYS OF LIFE.

IF WE CAN SPEED UP CONSULTATION BY CLARIFYING OUR INTERESTS THAN SO MUCH THE BETTER. IF WE CAN SPEED UP CONSULTATION BY CLARIFYING HOW WE SECURE OUR SHARE OF THE BENEFITS OF A MAJOR PROJECT THAN SO MUCH THE BETTER. IF WE CAN SPEED UP CONSULTATION BY ESTABLISHING SOME REASONABLE AND FAIRLY STANDARDIZED PROCEDURES FOR BENEFITING FROM A PROJECT THAN SO MUCH THE BETTER. ALL THESE DEVELOPMENTS MEAN THAT WE WILL BE IN A BETTER POSITION TO HELP OUR OWN PEOPLE.

THAT'S THE GOOD NEWS. I AM HERE TO TELL YOU THAT IF THEY REALLY UNDERSTOOD IT, THE VAST MAJORITY OF FIRST NATIONS WOULD PREFER A MORE CERTAIN AND STABLE INVESTMENT CLIMATE FOR RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT.

THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO ARE SIMPLY ANTI-DEVELOPMENT. I BELIEVE THEY ARE OUTNUMBERED BY PEOPLE WHO WOULD WELCOME DEVELOPMENT SO LONG AS IT BROUGHT A BETTER LIFE. MY PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE IS THAT RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT TODAY IS NO DIFFERENT THAN THE BUFFALO HUNT WAS IN THE PAST. THESE RESOURCES ARE GIFTS OF THE MOTHER EARTH.

THE BAD NEWS IS THAT IT IS NOT EASY RIGHT NOW FOR A FIRST NATION TO SHARE IN THE BENEFITS OF A RESOURCE PROJECT. FOR EXAMPLE, RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS BRING A GOOD DEAL OF ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT TO A REGION. THEY BRING SHOPS THAT PROVIDE SERVICES TO WORKERS. WHOLE ECONOMIES ARE GROWN FROM INVESTMENT THAT IS INDUCED BY RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. UNFORTUNATELY, FIRST NATIONS ARE LESS ABLE TO SHARE IN THIS INVESTMENT. IT IS ENORMOUSLY DIFFICULT TO DO BUSINESS ON FIRST NATION LAND. CONSEQUENTLY, WE ARE LESS ABLE TO ATTRACT THIS INDUCED INVESTMENT AND SO THE SHARE OF A PROJECT'S DIRECT BENEFIT THAT WE REQUIRE RISES.

I DON'T THINK IT SHOULD BE THIS WAY. IT MAKES IT MORE DIFFICULT TO CLOSE A DEAL AND WE ALL PAY THE PRICE. I THINK AN IMPORTANT FIRST STEP TOWARDS MAKING RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS MORE ATTRACTIVE TO FIRST NATIONS WOULD BE TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR A FIRST NATION TO RECEIVE INDUCED INVESTMENT. THIS IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE WORK I AM DOING AS THE VICE-CHAIR OF THE INDIAN TAXATION ADVISORY BOARD.

ANOTHER PROBLEM IS THAT THERE IS UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE FISCAL ARRANGEMENTS. FIRST NATIONS PEOPLE DON'T HAVE THE BENEFIT OF A TRANSPARENT SYSTEM OF FISCAL TRANSFERS LIKE OTHER CANADIANS. WHEN A PROJECT BRINGS BENEFITS TO OUR COMMUNITY WE SECRETLY WONDER IF MUCH OF IT WON'T BE "TAXED" BACK IN THE FORM OF REDUCED TRANSFERS. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? IT MEANS THAT FOR US PROJECTS ARE RISKIER THAN THEY SHOULD BE AND RISK KILLS DEALS.

A THIRD PROBLEM IS THAT MOST FIRST NATIONS WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN SOME OF THE MAJOR PROJECTS THAT HAPPEN ON OUR LAND. BUT IT IS ENORMOUSLY DIFFICULT

FOR US TO ACCESS THE FINANCING WE NEED TO DO THIS. WE DON'T HAVE A TRACK RECORD ISSUING BONDS. THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT COULD HELP A GREAT DEAL. IT COULD CREATE A FUND OF "FIRST PAYMENT" TO PROVIDE COMFORT TO LENDERS WHEN A FIRST NATION IS ENTERING INTO A JOINT VENTURE ARRANGEMENT ON A MAJOR RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT. IN FACT, IT COULD CREATE AN AGENCY THAT IS SPECIFICALLY TASKED WITH HELPING FIRST NATIONS NEGOTIATE PARTICIPATION IN THESE LARGE PROJECTS. THIS WOULD FACILITATE NEGOTIATIONS. IT WOULD MEAN THAT A SIGNIFICANT SHARE OF THE PROCEEDS FROM MAJOR PROJECTS WOULD STAY IN COMMUNITIES. IT WOULD BE A GOOD PLACE TO DEVELOP THE BUSINESS SKILLS THAT ARE SO OFTEN LACKING. WE TEND TO SEE OUR MOST EDUCATED PEOPLE PURSUE CAREERS IN LAW RATHER THAN BUSINESS. I THINK WE NEED MORE BALANCE. FINALLY, IT WOULD BE A GREAT EXERCISE FOR ANY FIRST NATION GOVERNMENT TO PURSUE DEBT. IT WOULD PROVIDE A CARROT FOR IMPROVED GOVERNANCE TO REPLACE THE STICK THAT IS SO OFTEN USED.