

News Media Services
Room 29, Legislative Building
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3C 0V8

Telephone: (204) 945-3746
Facsimile: (204) 945-3988
nmervices@leg.gov.mb.ca
www.gov.mb.ca

November 16, 2004

PROVINCE RECEIVES REPORT ON FUTURE OF EAST SIDE OF LAKE WINNIPEG

Conservation Minister Stan Struthers today received the East Side Planning Initiative (ESPI) final report, the culmination of 80 meetings and hundreds of hours of discussions with people representing First Nations, Métis and non-Aboriginal communities within the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

The minister noted that the east side represents one of the largest stands of contiguous boreal forests in North America and that 96 per cent of the population of the area is of First Nations descent.

"The boreal forest and the people who live in the area are the primary considerations of our government," said Struthers. "This is a vast report that I will immediately review and share with my colleagues. I would like to thank participants for all of their hard work in putting this report together, from the leadership of elders and youth of east side communities, to the Northern Affairs Community Council, and environment and industry representatives."

The report makes 102 recommendations on issues important to residents on the east side and protection of the environment in which they live.

"This is a framework for a broad area plan for the east side of Lake Winnipeg," said National Chief Phil Fontaine, chair of ESPI. "It will shape the way we deal with environment and community economic development in this special area, ensuring that First Nations can establish sustainable economies. It is also a critical step forward for the 16 First Nations on the east side who will work side by side with the Province of Manitoba, government to government."

- more -

Struthers noted that immediate actions on receiving the report include the continuation of the East Side First Nations Council and the commencement today of protocol discussions based on the memorandum of understanding signed by 13 of 16 First Nations communities. All communities remain participants in this historic process.

“Both of these initiatives follow up on our government’s commitment to work directly with First Nations in the area to ensure the sustainability of the boreal forest and community economic development opportunities into the future,” said Struthers. “I look forward to working with the East Side First Nations Council and to the protocol talks that are beginning today.”