



### 3. The Broad Area Plan: A Statement of Vision and Values

The area of eastern Manitoba contained within the boundaries of the East Side of Lake Winnipeg Broad Area Plan is one of unparalleled beauty and rugged fragility. It is a land defined by the repeated advance and retreat of glaciers where bedrock shield and thousands of lakes have shaped the habits and character of its inhabitants for millenniums. From the traditional lands of Bunibonibee First Nation in the north to the riparian perimeter of the Winnipeg River in the south, it is some 82,000 square kilometres in area. Thirty-six thousand residents living in 34 communities inhabit the east side, and nearly 96 per cent of that population is First Nations peoples. The geography is part of the largest eco-zone in Canada (Boreal Shield) and contains the fourth largest, contiguous boreal forest in the world. Despite its craggy and foreboding landscape, it is an area teeming in natural resources and enjoys a significant and healthy biodiversity.

As any of its residents who live there will tell you, it is a special place, deserving of special measures to ensure that the environment is protected and all development is sustainable.

The Consultation on Sustainable Development Implementation, or COSDI report, provided Manitobans with a unique and timely vision of the future of sustainable resource use and conservation in Manitoba. Accepted in its entirety in 2000 by the current provincial government, the report is the genesis of the Broad Area Plan for the east side of Lake Winnipeg. COSDI's vision for Manitobans is that they work together:

*To develop an integrated framework for large area and municipal planning, significant resource allocations and environmental management decisions to ensure sustainable development in Manitoba.*

*Consultation on Sustainable Development Implementation – 1999*



## A Vision for the Broad Area Plan

The East Side Planning Initiative (ESPI) seeks to put into practice the vision articulated in COSDI. In doing so, it will create an extension of that vision and chart a new course for the future of land use on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. It is a vision that is based on a number of fundamental principles, first and foremost among them being an innovative approach to planning, grounded on the premise that the land is and must continue to be protected.

It is a vision which:

- equates the importance of human development with the requirement for a wise and sustainable stewardship of the land;
- regards the east side as a protected landscape in which economic development activities are permitted if it is agreed that they are sustainable and benefit local communities;
- believes human development must be grounded on integrated and coordinated planning that honours the social integrity of communities and the natural integrity of the environment;
- commits to planning for the sustainability of the ecosystem, where our human interactions with it must maintain or restore ecological integrity and not cause it to deteriorate;
- understands there are environmental thresholds for all human activity;
- recognizes the rights of the area's inhabitants to have access to services and necessities that will improve the quality of their lives;
- invites Manitobans to steward and value all the resources that may be found there – resources that include the cultural uniqueness of those who live there and the natural resources that have defined and contributed so significantly to our economy; and
- embraces the immeasurable value to our spiritual and psychological well-being that is provided by a landscape of animals, forests, water, air, soil and rock, all of which comprise the natural capital of the area. This landscape has contributed to the definition of our character and identity as Aboriginal peoples, Manitobans and Canadians.

It is also a vision that magnifies the critical importance of scale. As COSDI correctly suggests:

*(Broad Area or Watershed Plans) provide the vehicle to assemble information/science respecting the ability of the environment to sustain and absorb, and rebound from the impacts of human activity, to know the threshold limits of the environment and natural resources. Conducting studies and developing sustainable development plans on the basis of natural boundaries such as watersheds or eco-systems will help understand the environmental and physical restraints within which economic, social and cultural*

*development, or the protection and enhancement of the natural environment and human health are allowed to occur.*

*Consultation on Sustainable Development Implementation – 1999*

Ultimately, the Broad Area Plan for the east side of Lake Winnipeg envisions a different social contract. It is between those who inhabit the area and those who wish to use and exploit the resources found there; between those who work within the landscape, and the environment or natural landscape that harbours and yields the resources sought.

It is also a contract among all Manitobans. This includes the residents of the east side and their governments, where the latter are relied upon to protect this enduring and endearing landscape for future generations. This social contract recognizes the paramount importance of the right to human development in all its dimensions but not at the cost of diminishing the environment that sustains us all.

### **Values Sustaining the Broad Area Plan**

There are a number of fundamental and important values that surround the Broad Area Plan and give it integrity. In addition to the development/conservation ethic defined above, it is critical that the interests and desires of those who live on the east side of Lake Winnipeg be incorporated into the fabric of the plan. This will help in striving to reconcile substantial differences. The plan must incorporate an ongoing mechanism that will provide for meaningful public participation in its further development and governance. This mechanism must also provide for the implementation, monitoring, evaluation and renewal of the plan on a systematic and regular basis. As such, the Broad Area Plan creates the framework for the preparation of more detailed regional land-use plans and the full integration of community plans.

The Broad Area Plan recognizes the enormous influence of the area's cultural landscape. It will honour the significant historical relationship extant between the land and its first inhabitants. ESPI will recognize, affirm and comply with Aboriginal rights and treaty obligations. It will develop and incorporate an inclusive and progressive memorandum of understanding and protocols of agreement that recognize the importance of the consultative process, as well as the nature of the government-to-government relationship, essential to the definition of new approaches to traditional land use and possible resource sharing.

The Broad Area Plan places an exceptional value on the importance of traditional ecological knowledge and sound science in developing a comprehensive land-use planning information database. This database must be used to both guide and support all major resource and land-use decisions in the plan. Without the data, an understanding of the threshold limits in the environment cannot be achieved. In the absence of such, the "precautionary

***"Due to the language barrier and infrequency of communication between the two cultures, it is difficult to communicate and resolve local issues and concerns. There is a need to work closer together..."***

(East Side Resident)



principle” will become the automatic default mechanism. In other words, in the absence of adequate information about natural resources or threshold limits, decision-making will be on the side of caution. Planning precedes development; therefore, planning must be based on verifiable and comprehensive knowledge. From a data perspective, development will not be recommended on east side lands designated “terra incognita or lands unknown”. Consequently, without data available to support human activity or development, it is not in our best interests, nor that of the environment, to proceed.

Once completed, the East Side of Lake Winnipeg Broad Area Plan will provide strategic advice and direction to east side communities, government departments and agencies, and everyone engaged, or thinking of engaging, in commercial and recreational activities in the area. The plan will not so much be a prescription, but more of a template. The recommendations contained within the plan – the principles, codes of practice and land-use designations – can be incorporated into community- based planning models. The Broad Area Plan recognizes that communities have “zones of activities and influence”.

The East Side Round Table and the East Side First Nations Council are convinced that the Broad Area Plan for the east side of Lake Winnipeg must meet the needs of communities while respecting the integrity of the environment which sustains and surrounds them.

It is with this comprehensive and collective vision, and upon these values, that the Broad Area Plan for the east side of Lake Winnipeg will be developed.

