



North Superior
Workforce Planning Board

Presents:

Reading The Future: Thunder Bay District & Future Backwards Exercise Findings



“Think Globally, Act Locally” Event

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EMPLOYMENT ONTARIO

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INTRODUCTION

After a protracted period of consolidation in the forest products industry, the Thunder Bay District is looking at the possibility of an extended period of economic growth. The region has been working for a number of years on a strategy of diversification, reducing its dependence on forest products. Those efforts are starting to show results. Growth in health services focused on the unique needs of the north is becoming a reality.

Other efforts to incubate and nourish new enterprises are also taking shape. Most recently, the prospect of large-scale development of vast mineral deposits has captured the attention of the region's leaders and its population. The projected growth in mining is being driven by a set of forces that while not new to the region, have a new twist. Demand for its resource-based products have always come from outside the region, but have historically been more closely linked to economic performance in the United States and the rest of Canada. New growth will come from farther afield driven by wealth expansion in Asia, in addition to its historic markets. With economic drivers being farther afield the region's future will be correlated less with that of the manufacturing heartland of Ontario and follow westward pulls as well as the more familiar north-south influences. This is important in that while the region needs investment to meet overseas demand; Ontario, as it is at the moment, may not be well positioned to help as its concerns are shifted to a flagging manufacturing sector in the southern portion of the province and its instruments of human resource development are designed to deal with the negative adjustments of industries going through consolidations.

Development will likely take on a very different look as well. In the past, resource development brought with it the creation of small settlements and all the attendant amenities and services associated with a community. Modern resource development relies much more on relocating workers for rotations to the worksite

and housing them in hotel-like accommodations and then returning them to their home communities for the off-rotation period. This means that proximity no longer plays as strong a role in recruitment decisions of operators and workers can come from outside the region.

It equally means that the benefits of development are carried in the income of individual workers and dispersed across the home communities of those workers with the operators playing a far less prominent role in community development activities unless specifically negotiated. Additionally with operators drawing workers from a wider area, they can recruit the already skilled and may be less interested in investing in skill development of local workers.

The role of Thunder Bay as the region's single metropolis and hub will also be important as it can either become the central engine of development growth or lose that position to cities further west or east.

The development of the Thunder Bay District will be confronted with new challenges. Among these, four will need to be addressed as part of a labour force development strategy for the region. These are:

- Reading the future requirements;
- Adjusting to a structure that is not well suited for positive adjustments;
- Readyng the region for the second and third order consequences associated with development; and
- Using areas of influence to modulate the forces of development in a positive way.

Each of these challenges deserves separate treatment.



READING THE FUTURE REQUIREMENTS

Growth in the region, other than mining, will likely occur in a fashion that should not cause significant disruptions. Pressure will be on increasing skill levels and on developing the social environment that will attract and retain high skilled workers but at a manageable pace.

Mining development, on the other hand, has the potential to occur rapidly and intensely, but in spurts punctuated by periods of inactivity or even decline driven by global demand. Within the last few months, we have seen mining projects that were in the early stages now delayed by two or more years. The world economy remains fragile and investment funding for major expansions is difficult to secure. That said, the situation may change suddenly and projects developed quickly drawing on labour and equipment from where it is available.



It will not be possible to predict when development is likely to start or with what intensity. This will

make skill upgrading of the existing workforce difficult, as skills not used after they are acquired tend to decline quite quickly. That said, the training time for at least a part of the workforce may be quite long.

Working closely with companies can help provide a clearer, more forward looking picture of skill needs and hiring agreements may help ensure that local labour is considered first.

Working with the Mining Industry Human Resources Council to get precise information on how the human resources needs of mines evolve over their lifetime and even establishing some case studies using recent developments in the region like the Detour Mine would be useful

in building a better picture of the evolution of needs.

Additionally, if arrangements can be established with companies to signal their forward-looking requirements as a way of supplementing labour market information it will help promote requirements being filled from within the region. A region-first hiring policy could also strengthen the partnership between operators and the communities of the region.

Beyond that, there are two pieces of planning and development that can help smooth the inevitable and unpredictable unevenness in labour demand over the coming years. The first focuses on increasing the resilience of individual workers through focusing on employment options such as becoming self-employed and then making those skills part of the overall training offer.

A second route is the creation of transitional labour markets using infrastructure and other forms of public works to stimulate demand during periods of temporary inactivity in the main employment markets. Transitional labour markets are hardly new but have not typically been used in regional development activity. There is a strong case for coordinating public projects in the region at all three levels of government as a buffer to unevenness in organic growth.

Additionally, the use of instruments of social economy may be useful in bridging individuals into future jobs through providing useful experience and ensuring that skills do not atrophy as the demand builds to absorb workers. Social economy activity can be structured as mutuals and co-operatives as well as social enterprises that are businesses with social goals.

Municipalities can assist in the support of social economy activity by directing certain types of municipal work to these enterprises.

WORKING WITHIN A STRUCTURE THAT IS NOT WELL-SUITED TO DEAL WITH POSITIVE ADJUSTMENT

Most adjustment mechanisms available to local labour force planners were developed to mediate the effects of negative adjustments. This will cause difficulties for the region in maximizing benefits for local residents. The system, as it is currently conceptualized, sees its principal purpose as connecting unemployed individuals with employment opportunities via direct placement and in some cases with short periods of training. The future employment market is seen as largely similar to the existing one with most segments being quite stable.

In cases of rapid development, large portions of the market can become active as those already employed take higher paying jobs creating opportunities in their old positions. The unemployed may not have access to the most interesting opportunities nor be in the first round of intakes as successive cohorts of currently underemployed capitalize on the job openings. For example, training currently unemployed workers in areas of anticipated skills needs may not create a link to the initial employment opportunity. Others already in the labour market grab these jobs, creating a domino effect of openings for the unemployed being drawn into the market, after one or two rounds of hiring have occurred. Rigidities in the overall market can limit end results in particular if employers begin widening their scope of search beyond the geographic boundaries of the region. Labour market information and broad access to training can increase the suppleness of the system.

Subsidized training is mainly limited to individuals with entitlements under E.I. or Ontario Works; although new training programs at both the federal and provincial level widen the criteria.

For two important groups, however, there is little help. For young people entering the labour force, this will usually mean that skill development will need to be carried by personal savings and loans such as OSAP, or privately financed. Access is less an issue here as is making the right selection of courses and persistence to completion and in job search. For individuals who are currently working and engaged in part-time

learning, they will likely be able to finance those studies at their personal expense and on personal time. This latter group, receiving little attention, can be an important source of labour for the upcoming expansion, filling managerial and professional staff roles to support operations as well as becoming available to fill trades professions. They may require little by way of upgrading, but it may be important to receive certification to secure the best opportunities as credentials and educational attainment are playing a greater role in recruitment decisions. They also represent that part of the labour force that is the most able to deal with the inevitable unevenness of future job growth. To maximize the employment benefits for the region it will be necessary to accept that the entire labour market will become fluid—not simply its margins.

Pushing this even further, the new developing industries drawing from existing employed—and thereby creating opportunities for local residents to fill the newly vacated positions—will keep a larger share of the overall benefits in the region. This can seem counter intuitive in a system that is focused on getting the unemployed employed and even produce a hostile reaction among resident employers who risk losing good employees. Working actively with employers to prepare for more volatility in labour markets is an important dimension of a comprehensive human resources planning.

High quality labour market information is the starting point to allow both individuals and firms to capitalize on the changing nature of the region's labour markets. One of the important planning tools for the upcoming period would be good labour supply information in the form of a skills map for the region, in part to obtain some indication of the potential movements within job groupings as well as to form a planning base for skills development activities which could form part of the skills strategy. Good supply information can also be used as an important tool in working with incoming employers, encouraging them to work within the geographic boundaries of the region first. Supply information can be particularly important for

small communities closer to sites in order to give confidence and credence to focusing benefits in the immediate area. In the absence of good supply information, developers are working with anecdotes, conjectures, and biases from previous experience.

Additionally, supporting local business and individuals with tailored services can help transition to the new employment reality easier. Counseling may play an important role in helping individuals make a determination about what career moves might be good and for business to forward think their requirements and vulnerabilities. The ability of the Workforce Planning Board to engage across all sectors at all levels of employment will be a good indication of how much the region will take advantage of the development activities.

Finally, there will be a residual of people who will not have the means to either finance skill upgrading or have access to other financing alternatives. Basic skills development is an obvious place to intensify effort as these skills are required for all entry-level positions in all fields. Early intensive attention to essential skills is

necessary to ensure that further marginalization does not occur as a result of development.

The educational institutions, primarily the college, will carry the greatest part of the burden of skills upgrading. The education sector working closely with the Workforce Planning Board and the economic development groups will be essential to ensure that the region obtains the greatest benefit from future development activity.

A tool that can prove useful for evaluating and planning for the impacts of the development would be a human resources plan for the region. This would go beyond demand forecasting in labour market plans and look at labour supply and skill matching. A Human Resources Plan would involve the close collaboration of the economic development actors, employers, the education institutions, community planners and the Workforce Planning Board. A good human resource plan would help align skills development including skills upgrading with market demand and help planning in migration of labour. It would be equally useful as a basis for planning municipal services and even the selective development of transitional labour markets.



Photo credit: Stewart Kallio

READYING THE REGION

Second order impacts associated with increases in personal spending by mine workers will benefit the region to the extent that the region's residents can capture a large share of the primary mining jobs. The extent to which the region's businesses are able to secure a position in the supply chain of material that supports the mining operations as well as become integrated in the value chain of the region's mining production will determine how much of the wealth generated by the extracted minerals stays in the region. It is possible that some or even a great deal of the forecasted activity could direct its principal benefits outside the region should the development strategy of the region focus exclusively on developing the natural resource potential and fail to connect a human resources development strategy to the overall plan.

It is easy to focus on the primary driver of growth and focus attention on the mining sector and ensuring that there is the infrastructure, materials supply and skilled workforce that will support that sector to the exclusion of much of what will be second order and even third order impacts on the economy. Studies such as the recent Conference Board report suggest that for every job in the sector that there will be two or even three jobs created as part of the overall economic activity (these are second order impacts). These jobs will be distributed broadly throughout the economy but primarily in the service sectors. Many will be at entry-level skill levels and at wage rates that may struggle to keep up with costs of big-ticket expenditures such as housing. Thunder Bay has been a leader in promoting Living wage type policies and will need to continue to work aggressively to ensure that housing remains affordable and that the most marginalized also benefit from development. To be sure this involves human capital development, but also a broader range of services that support broad participation in the workforce. This will be a challenge, as cost pressures will run in advance of revenues. In many ways, the basis for the city and indeed other municipalities in the region, to have to raise revenue to develop social infrastructure works poorly under the pressures of rapid development.

Another level of impacts will be felt as individuals see growth in the Thunder Bay District as an opportunity to positively alter their life fortunes. These will be newcomers and will represent residents of other parts of the province and Canada as well as immigrants who will choose primarily the city of Thunder Bay as a destination in anticipation of a bright future. While some will come with a job in hand, or the means to create it, others will be drawn by the prospects without a job. Other newcomers will be at the edges of the economy, placing a higher demand on policing and social services. This will continue to add to costs of the region's municipalities—primarily Thunder Bay—in the absence of any corresponding

source of revenue. As the wealth being generated is highly portable in the wages of workers and the revenues of companies, new ways of sharing that wealth with communities that provide social and commercial infrastructure is an essential part of development that will need to be developed.

The region's stakeholders can influence the outcomes of the development as long as they are clear about what benefits they are looking for in the development. It is important to keep front of mind that modern development does not build communities as a byproduct of its activity as it once did. The region's stakeholders will need to negotiate with the operators for reasonable accommodations and sharing in the benefits associated with the extraction activity. Part of those benefits will be in the form of commitments to direct benefits of economic activity to the region, including local hiring where possible, use of the region's businesses as suppliers of materials and services, and on a larger scale resource sharing to help with the attendant municipal costs associated with growth and perhaps even the further processing of minerals within the region to promote further



development. It will as well involve the expectations of environmental stewardship. Starting from the position that the operators are and want to be good corporate citizens, it will be

important for the region's stakeholders to specify their reasonable expectations and their commitments to the operators establishing a covenant for the development.

USING THOSE LEVERS THAT THE REGION HAS TO HELP MODULATE GROWTH

So far we have looked at the roles of scanning accumulation of knowledge and planning as a way of gaining insight into the evolution of change in the labour market and using planning as a way of connecting various institutional response capabilities. There is one other tool the region can deploy to help make the transition and growth forecast work in the greatest interest of the region's population. The resource development will occur at its pace, being driven by global demand and capital flows but attendant development such as the infrastructure needed to support growth can be timed much more by authorities within and connected to the region. This offers some possibility of advancing the growth in the short term as well as moderating the effects of lulls over the course of its development.

To be sure, significant investments in infrastructure are needed to open up the opportunity of development and much of that will need to

occur early in the cycle. Energy and transportation infrastructure will need to be developed in advance of mining operations and in some cases the planning of those mines will be contingent on the infrastructure being in place. But other projects can be scheduled more at the discretion of regional officials and these can play an important role in developing the human resources in readiness for their more permanent employment in subsequent phases of development. Many of the skills used in the infrastructure development will be those that are used in the mining industry itself and workers will be able to transition from the construction activities to permanent industries.

It was mentioned earlier that social economic activities, although playing a smaller role, may offer additional levers controlled within the region to help fill gaps and smooth uneven development.



CONCLUSION

The general sense of optimism about the Thunder Bay District's future prospects is well warranted. The prospect of significant development over the next decade raises the prospects for a period of sustained economic growth. Capturing all or even most of those benefits as a region is not a sure thing. Modern resource development is very different from when it first brought growth to the region. Workers can be recruited and moved from afar and can carry their wages to areas outside the region. Supply arrangements can see goods moved into the region with benefits accrued elsewhere and the extracted resource can be moved to other regions for processing.

There is a process of planning for growth that has started in the Thunder Bay District that proper planning can help ensure a large share of the benefits of development are focused close to the development sites and more broadly within the region. Human resource planning is a key element of that planning. While demand side requirements are being developed, knowledge of the skills supply of the region remains underdeveloped and planning would benefit from a regional skills map.

Current focus has been necessarily on moving the unemployed into employment. This focus will need to be augmented by greater attention to the whole of the labour market and increasing overall mobility to ensure the region's skills are optimally used. The labour market will likely and should become more dynamic, but this will create tensions and existing businesses can benefit from HR planning support to ensure that they are resilient in the face of greater activity. Those currently employed can also benefit from career advice and knowledge of opportunities and the requirements of those jobs. This in turn will place additional demands on continuing education structures. Close collaboration among the Workforce Planning Board's interests, the education sector, and the economic development groups will be needed to maximize the positive benefits development for Thunder Bay District.

The region's social infrastructure will be tested as newcomers looking for opportunities enter the region. Others will also follow devel-

opment and create the need for extra policing and social services. Costs will run in advance of revenues and new ways of connecting development to civic amenities will need to be thought through. Growth will additionally put pressure on existing services and policies to promote an environment where wages support the cost of living in the community.

The region can at the same time contribute to smoothing some of unevenness of development by using its own projects to fill periods of slower development and prepare workers for the demands of more permanent work. The social economy can and should have a role in extending the reach of these efforts.

To advance development in a way that captures as many benefits as possible for the region, four actions have been suggested:

- 1) Regional stakeholders clarify their expectations for the development process and in particular the expectations of each of the major players forming the basis of a covenant that can guide both the process and those involved;
- 2) The Workforce Planning Board work with the Mining Industry Human Resources Council to establish a detailed profile of the human resources needs as they evolve throughout the life cycle of a mine and develop case studies of human resource activity of recent development projects;
- 3) The region should consider developing a comprehensive human resources strategy including detailed skills supply information as a way of informing skills development, immigration projections and establishing potential secondary business development activity and its skills requirements; and,
- 4) The region should look at the possibilities of evening growth, using transitional labour markets built through its own infrastructure projects and favouring constructive use of social economy as a way of transitioning workers into higher skill activity.

FUTURE BACKWARDS EXERCISE

Background on the method

In a complex environment, it is very hard to disentangle all of the interrelated connections that influence the forward movement of our projects. Some of these entanglements are that our history affects the way we see and approach new things, sometimes creating a dependency on an old path. Others are that projects going forward include, in a larger sense, fears and aspirations based on our past experiences. Surfacing these early in process of working on projects, especially where they are collaborations, can help focus the broader objectives and provide guidance on the way we can work through important decisions.

Additionally, one of the keys to making good progress is that much of the important knowledge held in groups is tacit knowledge, held in individual experiences and expressed often as stories or metaphors by its members. We know more than we say and we say more than we write down but perhaps most importantly we only know what we know when we need to know it so providing opportunities for groups to discuss and tell stories in a facilitated way can help tap into important knowledge held by members of the collaboration.

There is an old expression that hindsight is 20/20. Using this image, Dave Snowden developed a process of “looking forward by looking backwards,” pretending, as it were, that we are already there and then reflecting on “how we got here.” The technique is being successfully used by organizations as an exercise to initiate new projects. It helps bring new members of a collaboration up to speed by hearing the stories of more experienced members. It can also help build a common narrative as a base for moving forward and identify success milestones and potential pitfalls.

The exercise was used as a way of providing a facilitated conversation about the future of the North Superior Region among the stakeholders of the North Superior Work Force Planning Board on February 19, 2013. The exercise was conducted within a one-hour time limit and reflects the time pressure placed on each segment. There were eight tables of between eight and ten people with each table representing a mix of perspectives from the region.

The conversation was stimulated by a set of general questions starting with “Where are we now?” to establish a base line description of the current state. A second question “how did we get here?” was used creating a practice of working backwards establishing important events starting with the most recent and then the next most recent and so forth. Working this way is very different from our normal way of thinking which is to pick a starting point and then to reconstruct the history moving forward linking past events to more recent ones.

After the first part of exercise provided a familiarity with the technique a second set of questions hypothesized a best-case future state. Participants were then asked to work back one-step at a time inventing events starting with the one that immediately preceded the future state and then the one before that and so on until they had worked back linking the future trajectory with an event that has led up to our current state. This creates “a scenario”, a story about the future and how we got there. The process was repeated to create a worst case scenario. An example of the output from one of the eight groups provides a visual reference for the material produced during the session.

backs are still raw and future visibility is foggy. What is perhaps most important to clarify is the degree to which all partners are aligned on a common go forward position that can be developed with a strong sense of local agency. Good places to start would be establishing what should be the appropriate balance between continued efforts in diversifying the economy based on community led efforts of the recent decade and how to prepare the

community for opportunities in the emerging resource sector.

Building a strong narrative around this is our current state is useful as a way of signaling a change point, a point from which we move forward and checking in with stake holders that we are all starting from the same place. It has a secondary benefit of being able to describe where the region is in simple consistent terms to outsiders.

Best case scenario

Descriptions of the best-case scenario focused principally on social outcomes. **Full employment** was frequently cited, as was **zero crime** rate, **healthy population** with corresponding declines in the need for food banks, emergency rooms and employment insurance and social assistance. Society is described as **egalitarian**, respectful, and **inclusive**, with new grads welcomed into the workforce; there is **no racism** or discrimination and Thunder Bay is seen electing its first Aboriginal mayor. The best case scenario also preserves what is seen

as great about the community, about community pride, it being the **best region** and becoming a beacon, while **staying small** and **environmentally sustainable** and **culturally rich**. The population is **well-educated** and **people get along**.

There are a smaller number of references on the economic side. Those references see the **economy as booming** and **Thunder Bay as a hub** of regional activity. The region is recognized as **innovative** and the **knowledge economy** is functioning well.

How did we get there?

Overwhelmingly groups cited collaboration as a significant step in success whether in a general context such as **integrating resources towards common good** or **community effort for the whole** or **joint planning tables** or we are **all paddling in the same canoe** or referencing the need for inclusion of specific groups such as needing more **private sector** representatives at the table or **employees** need to be more actively involved. An important step along the inclusion theme was seen as the **reconciliation between the first nations and the councils** and **resolution of aboriginal federal issues** as well as **more opportunity** for social and economic empowerment of aboriginal communities. Other groups mentioned were **women** and a call for their equal par-

ticipation along with an influx of **diverse populations**.

The second strong theme in the way we achieve an impossibly positive outcome was how groups worked together which includes **sharing information** openly or the motivation of all key players is **transparent** or **equal partnerships**.

Improved infrastructure was held as a necessary condition for success with all major infrastructure for the Ring of Fire being a go and significant infrastructure gains as well as energy costs being reasonable.

Human capital plays a critical role with skills and **literacy training** and accessibility to education and **training linked to jobs** and the execution of **training plans**. On the employment services side they would be more

closely managed with employers and the community.

Success involves a diversification of the economy as well as success in developing the resource opportunities expressed as a **diversified evolving economy** and the **markets for regions products** are robust and progressive growth promotion policies with specific mention of improvements in the knowledge economy and the creation of

Worst-case scenario



The worst-case scenario is described as a series of unfavorable social outcomes such as the **safety net overloaded** or **social services overwhelmed** or **poor living conditions** and at the extreme **total social breakdown**. **High unemployment** and income

How did we get here?

Events on the path to a worst-case scenario fall into five broad categories. Not surprisingly breakdowns in communication and trust featured heavily in events described by the groups. References included **failure to collaborate** and that we are **still fighting among ourselves** or there was a **communication breakdown** and **trust is broken**. Some groups saw communications breakdowns as the early precipitating influence in the downward cycle.

centres of excellence and knowledge mobilization. Increasing **entrepreneurship** was also seen as part of the overall evolution of the economy.

Finally critical steps to success were seen as development occurring in an environmentally friendly way including **sustainable mining** and the formation of a **regional climate consortium**.

inequality characterize the labour market with significant **out migration** leaving skills deficits and **plummeting housing prices**. Crime figures in the worst-case description for five groups cited as highest crime rate in Canada and **crime as the economic driver** and **gang activity**. Other aspects of a worst case involve **racism** shortages and **homelessness** with Thunder Bay turning into an urban ghetto. Peoples health is in decline and there is **total grid lock in the hospitals**.

On the economic side the **minerals stay in the ground** as there is no power to operate them and no resource sharing.

The environment is characterized as devastated with **irresponsible mining practices** and **water and air quality low** with even **foreign ownership of some of the water resource**. One group characterized the worst case as being like Fort McMurray.

Loss of key groups featured prominently in the path to a worst case. Failure to secure the agreement and participation of aboriginal groups also featured heavily in the events that precipitated a worst case referenced as **loss of co-operation of the aboriginal nation** or **breakdown of First Nations groups** and **government** and **Federal aboriginal breakdown**. Out-migration of youth was also identified.

A third theme focuses on decision-making and policies both in terms of internal process within the region as well as government failures. **Narrow focus** and **not focused on the vision** and a **lack of policy for the north** represented broad failures while **decision making by committee** the **wrong choice in training** and the **education system not meeting the needs** were more specific failures. On the government side events that moved the system towards a down trend were **major delays in approvals** and **no flexibility** (dictated by government)

and **no agreement at any level of government** and the **loss of government support** and failures in regulation like **environmental standards thrown out the window** and funding cuts causing **closure of the power plant and the college and university**.

The fourth group of references related to natural disasters mostly in the environmental area such as **loss of forest resource due to pine beetle** to **low water levels** the economy as in **major financial collapse** and health a **pandemic**.

Observations

While it is not possible to offer conclusive interpretations based on a single exercise held over the course of an hour, there are a number of important themes that emerged that merit further development.

1) **Building a strong narrative is a useful way of bringing stakeholders to a common point**

There could be benefit in doing additional work in developing a common narrative around the current situation and how we got here. Stories presented by the eight groups varied somewhat in the elements of the current situation and in particular whether the community was still in a period of negative adjustment or poised to move forward into a new phase of development. Building a common starting point is useful in launching big collaborations.

Again developing a narrative about how we got here and in particular developing those parts of the story that show resilience and collaboration forms a base for desired future development. Some elements that were identified included the region is making progress in diversifying its economic base, developing its knowledge assets in the college and university through centres of excellence and regionally focused training.

2) **It will be the social benefits that development brings that will determine success not development itself**

The eight tables focused very heavily on quality of life outcomes when describing

an ideal state or lack of quality of life when describing the worst case. Quality

of life involves at one level preserving the best that the region is and ensuring that development brings a rising quality to the community broadly and is reflected in a healthy population a more diverse, accepting and open region and

safe communities. There is a strong sense that the people of the region need to act collectively and ensure that groups that are currently at the margins of development are brought in and become its beneficiaries.

3) Establishing a strong collective effort is essential for development to succeed

There were numerous points in the exercise that indicate that it will be important to build a collective effort. The description of the current situation offered that a number of tables felt that collaboration is not currently strong. In the description of the ideal state, that represents the aspirations of the group, collaboration figured prominently. Equally in the worst-case description, that telegraphs the groups fears, breakdowns in collaboration and trust arose frequently. Building a strong base of the important groups involved in the development will likely be an essential ele-

ment of success, and failure to establish a collective base could likely mean uneven progress.

Central to the collective effort is the support of aboriginal communities and the resolution of outstanding issues with the Federal Government. The other reference that stands out as important is the need to have a more active participation of the companies involved although other references to social benefits suggest that the communities need to first focus on what are their requirements whether it be resource sharing or environmental conditions first.

4) Diversification needs to continue to be an important part of the regions planning

A number of the tables saw a broader development picture than just resource development. This included work that has taken place to build knowledge industries as well as continued attention on the traditional engines of the region's economy forestry and the port.

Particular attention was paid to the health sciences and the work that has been initiated with the NOSM and continuing to use the university and college as a way of drawing knowledge workers to the region.

5) A human resources strategy will be a critical element of a success

As the group represented stakeholders of the North Superior Work Force Planning Board it is no surprise that training

and employment would play an important role in the scenarios. The groups felt that a number of important deci-

sions were needed in particular around training and that failure to get the training dimension right would compromise success. The exercise was too short to allow for this to be adequately explored but it should be developed further with stakeholders to gain a full appreciation of what is needed and how it would fit into a broader human resources plan for the region. Other elements that pointed

to the need for a broad human resources planning exercise were the desire to integrate people who would come from outside the region and to balance the desire to see the benefits accrue within the region with the realization that the region would not be in a position to produce all the skilled workers that would be needed.



6) The role of Governments is critical to both launching broader development as well as to ensure that development takes place in a sustainable way

Governments figured prominently in every aspect of the exercise. The need for the three orders of government as well as First Nations to work closely to develop what will be the resource sharing arrangements with the companies

was central to a number of references in the exercise. Beyond that governments were seen as critical to establish the infrastructure around which development will occur. This included the provision of plentiful reasonably priced power as

well as transportation and other critical infrastructure for an expanding region. Additionally governments were seen to be essential in ensuring that the resource base was exploited in a sustainable fashion. Finally there were a great number of references to crime and the need to maintain strong social order during all phases of development.

Interestingly, governments featured much more prominently in the worse case scenarios than in the best-case scenarios suggesting that the position of governments in the overall narrative should be looked at to give them a prominent and positive role.

A Final Note

The exercise allowed for a large amount of sentiment around anticipated development to be captured in a relatively brief exercise. This provides a strong starting point for important work that will be undertaken in the coming months. There are a number of features

of an exercise like this that can guide and be incorporated in more fulsome work. In all cases, however, the output of the session should be validated as part of additional work and not presumed to be conclusive in and of itself.

APPENDIX: RAW DATA FROM FUTURE BACKWARDS EXERCISE

Description of Current Situation

Group 1

- Still a lot of uncertainty
- We are still divided and competing with each other
- Aboriginal youth increasing

Group 2

- Under preparedness (skills needed) for growth and economic development
- Lack of career direction for youth
- Lot of opportunity
- Aboriginal youth
- Significant turnover of people

Group 3

- High energy costs
- Can't find Tech jobs
- Still feeling the loss of forestry jobs
- Loss of Federal Jobs
- New premier and new cabinet (waiting to see)

Group 4

- Diversity
- Culture values clash
- Entitlement from local business
- Out migration
- Lack of long term care

Group 5

- Changing aboriginal demographics
- Aging infrastructure
- Out migration of youth
- Untrained new workforce
- Aging workforce

Group 6

- Youth out migration
- Increased aboriginal population
- Major resource development opportunities
- More specialized educational facilities =new educational facilities
- Higher property values

Group 7

- Greater sense of optimism
- Economic downturn has bottomed out
- Drop in population
- Lack of full time professional jobs
- Changing demographics

Group 8

- Undertrained
- Aboriginal population growing (lots of young people)
- Education growing
- Skilled people are leaving not being replaced
- Natural pharmaceutical company products
- Hospital has reached its capacity (need new facilities)
- Little business growth

Description of “How did we get here?”

Group 1

- Decline of industrialization
- Skilled labour left town
- Break down of communication and team work

Group 2

- Downsizing of the forest industry
- Dollar parity between Canada and US
- Health Services and Research
- Mineral development
- Change from goods movement to people movement

Group 3

- College and University both in Community
- Increase in the value of the \$CDN
- Out sourcing labour
- Transformation of employment Ontario
- Building of Hospitals
- Service Canada Shift

Group 4

- Big box stores
- Knowledge based work
- Influx of new workers
- Skills don't match jobs
- Seniors
- Lack of skills training
- Downsize Port
- Mills close

Group 5

- Branding of Northern Ontario
- Economic downturn
- Building of NOSM and Law school

Group 6

- Population turnover
- 2004 new hospital and Med school
- Bombardier
- 2003-2007 4 mills close
- 2008 world economy crashes

Group 7

- Big Box stores
- Global economy
- Change in Forestry
- International investment
- Research institute established

Group 8

- Job Losses
- Decline in forestry
- Baby steps to revitalize
- Regional increase in aboriginal services
- Regional partnerships
- Modernization of health care services

Description of the Best Case Scenario

Group 1

- We are control of our destiny
- We let our secret out that we are already in the best place in the world

Group 2

- Everyone has a high level of disposable income
- Fully engaged aboriginal community
- Forest stability
- Knowledge economy fully viable
- Population 120,000
- TBay centre of the mining and services industry

Group 3

- No taxes
- Pay equity all groups
- 30 hour work week
- Full employment
- Free tuition

Group 4

- No crime
- No need for a food bank
- Emergency room is empty
- We love working in Thunder Bay
- Life/ work balance
- TB is a hub
- Clean environment

Group 5

- No need for EI or social assistance
- Globally recognized for innovation
- Zero crime rate
- 0% unemployment
- Younger healthier work force

Group 6

- People just get along
- New grads are welcomed with jobs
- Free best education
- Sustainable region
- Region is a beacon of hope and opportunity

Group 7

- Inclusive and collaborative community
- No racism or discrimination
- Free education and extended health care
- Booming economy
- Recognized valued and respected
- Well educated people
- Differences are respected
- 1005 employment

Group 8

- Equality for every one
- First aboriginal mayor in TB
- Local grocery store
- Green energy
- More art in the city
- Everyone is working
- No taxes
- Exuberant-ville

Pathway to the impossibly best case scenario

Group 1

- More opportunity for social and economic empowerment for aboriginal communities
- More opportunities for cultural awareness within our communities
- Need more private sector at the table
- Share information openly
- Integrate local resources towards common goal
- Power when and where needed (cost of power in line)

Group 2

- Mining readiness strategy works
- Programs for school education and training work and jobs are linked
- Employees need to be more active in the process
- Manage employment services closer with employers and the community

Group 3

- Motivation of all key players is transparent
- Economic action plan- properties and needs ready
- Execution of training plans
- Progressive growth promotion policies
- Innovation = increased efficiency
- Increase of commodity prices
- Resource revenue sharing

Group 4

- Community effort for the whole
- Co-operation
- Positive impact of changes
- Knowledge mobilization
- Branding of Thunder Bay
- Learn from research and innovation
- Partnerships

Group 5

- Jobs in all areas and levels
- Accessibility to education for all
- Skills and literacy Training
- Reconciliation between first nations and councils
- Accessibility to health care
- Development of centres of excellence

Group 6

- Region wins major international award put on world stage
- More reasonable rational media
- 2013-2020 all major infrastructure for ring of fire is a go
- Increased entrepreneurial mindset in the region
- Markets for regions goods is robust

Group 7

- Significant infrastructure gains
- Healthier life styles and maintenance
- Resolution of aboriginal federal issues
- Joint planning tables
- Significant industry growth
- Diversified evolving economies

Group 8

- Equal partnership
- Influx of diverse population
- More communications
- Regional climate consortium
- Encourage small business
- Re-education we are all paddling in one canoe
- 3 out of 4 new jobs are created
- Momentum of sustainable mining
- Women are equal in the workforce

Worst-case scenario

Group 1

- Safety net overloaded and can't keep up
- Continuous grid lock in hospital
- Worst crime rate in Canada
- All taxes skyrocket
- Thunder bay is a ghetto
- Let them eat tuna

Group 2

- Silo based region
- Looked like Fort McMurray
- No local skilled work force
- Continued exit of youth
- No resource revenue sharing
- No power for mines

Group 3

- High unemployment
- Major social issues
- No middle class
- Gang activity, racism
- Breakdown of infrastructure
- Plummeting real estate values

Group 4

- Dependency on government
- Costs for services increase
- Total social breakdown
- Crime is the economic driver
- Minerals stay in ground
- Total outmigration
- No educational opportunities

Group 5

- Water low level/lack of drinkable water
- Environmental devastation
- Social services overwhelmed
- Hopelessness
- Sick poor population

Group 6

- Widening gaps in income/race/employment
- Age structure flipped upside down
- Crime rate increase
- Missed major opportunities
- Housing market collapse

Group 7

- Poor living conditions
- Contaminated air and water
- No sense of community
- Crumbling infrastructure
- Racism
- Schools closed
- Exceeding rates of crime
- Poverty
- Unhealthy population

Group 8

- Americans or Chinese own our water
- Melting polar caps
- Irresponsible mining practices dark days for the community
- Shortage of food
- Shortage of gas
- High unemployment
- No housing-more people living in the streets
- Asian carp invades lake Superior
- Somebody steals the Persian recipe
- Provincial and federal bankruptcy
- Youth on ice flows
- 1% take it all
- Health system breaks

Pathway to the impossibly bad scenario

Group 1

- No communication trust is broken
- Decision making by committee
- Wrong choice of training
- Not focused on the vision
- Still fighting among ourselves

Group 2

- Extreme activism/ crisis and chaos
- Education stays the same and does not meet the needs
- Lose the co-operation of the aboriginal nation
- Global financial crisis commodity bust
- Loss of forest resource (pine beetle)

Group 3

- No funding huge cuts
- Massive layoffs
- Decrease in taxation revenue
- Collapse of commodities
- Failure to collaborate
- Out migration
- Narrow focus
- Major delays in approvals

Group 4

- Sleeping giant tsunami
- Isolation
- Education cuts
- Loss of government support
- High tax rate
- Exodus of skills
- Major industry closure
- Communication breakdown

Group 5

- Lack of good policy
- No flexibility locally to meet needs (dictated by government)
- Environmental standards thrown out the window
- Breakdown of first nations groups and government
- Closing of the power plant
- No jobs (trained people in the wrong sectors)

Group 6

- Social unrest leading to civil unrest
- No agreement at any level of government
- Declining enrollment at universities
- Continued shortage of skilled trades
- Demand for minerals plummets

Group 7

- Drastic climate change
- World invasion
- Hit by an asteroid
- Federal aboriginal breakdown
- Contaminated water and soil
- Lack of policy for the north
- Pandemic
- Economic collapse

Group 8

- Rolling blackouts no electricity
- Water levels are low
- Youth has disappeared city bankrupt
- Abandoned buildings environmental devastation
- Youth has disappeared
- Racial violence
- Walmart on every corner



North Superior

Workforce Planning Board

***“Connecting community partners to improve the quality of life
in our communities through workforce development.”***