

# **Finance Committee Recommendations**

**August 11, 2011**

**Submitted by:**

**Cherylynn Walters, Chair/CEO and Colleen Stinson, Manager of Special Projects  
Marieval Enterprise Center Inc.**

Box 236

Grayson, SK

S0A 1E0

And

**Marie Prebushewski, Executive Director & Project Manager  
Thickwood Hills Business and Learning Network Inc.**

Box 100

Hafford, SK S0J 1A0

Phone (306) 549-4726

Fax (888) 259-5997

## **Executive Summary**

A prepared, trained and skilled workforce is essential for a competitive Canadian workforce. This is achieved through programs that support the building of skilled, knowledgeable and future oriented workers, communities and businesses. The recommendations that we are making are focused on the development and growth of rural, remote and First Nation communities. We are recommending that supporting multi-year funding for the Community Access Program, environmental education and community preparedness are good returns on investment and essential to the full participation of Canadians into the knowledge and green economies.

## **Recommendation #1: Support the Community Access Program**

### **Background**

Computer literacy skills are considered to be essential skills by the International Literacy Survey (2003). In order for Canadians to compete in the global economy they need to have access to computers, high-speed Internet and Information and Communications Technology. This allows Canadians to build their digital skills and participate in the global economy as digital citizens. However, not all Canadians have equal access to high-speed Internet or the opportunities to access information and communications technologies (ICT's), computers, and the wide variety of activities and opportunities available on the Internet. This gap in accessibility between individuals, households, businesses and geographic areas at different socio-economic levels is referred to as the **digital divide**.

The Community Access Program (CAP) is a Government of Canada initiative, administered by Industry Canada, which is addressing the digital divide. Nationally, the program costs 14.4 million. CAP provides Canadians with affordable public access to the Internet and teaches the skills they need to use it effectively. CAP helps Canadians, wherever they live; take advantage of emerging opportunities in the new global knowledge-based economy. In the beginning of CAP, public locations like businesses, schools, libraries and community centers acted as “on-ramps” to the Information Highway and provided computer support and training. CAP has now evolved into a vehicle for community and economic development particularly in rural, remote and First Nation communities. CAP plays a crucial role in bridging the digital divide. It contributes to the foundation for electronic access to government services; encourages on-line learning and literacy; fosters the development of community based infrastructure; and, promotes Canadian e-commerce.

CAP is complemented by its youth initiative, the [Community Access Program Youth Initiative \(CAP YI\)](#). The youth program provides employment opportunities to young Canadians between the ages of 15 to 30 in various CAP sites across the country. In many situations, it is the first employment experience for youth. The program assists youth in developing a wide range of work related skills including: business, computer and information and communication technology skills etc.... These skills help youth for future jobs.

In summary, CAP is a catalyst for economic and social change in our communities. CAP is a good return on investment for both community and youth development. It continues to support access to rural high-speed Internet and the development of on-line businesses. CAP breaks down socioeconomic barriers for those that would be left behind minimizing the technological divide. It empowers rural, remote and First Nation communities to build the capacity of their human resources by developing e-literacy, developing work related skills and creating lifelong learning opportunities. It allows rural communities to participate in e-commerce and to create innovative economic and social solutions for their communities in the global economy while reducing rural isolation. CAP has evolved; it has a strategic role in economic, community and youth development especially in rural, remote and First Nation communities.

**Recommendation #1:** Introduce multi-year funding for the Community Access Program (CAP) at the current level to allow communities to build developmental plans and maximize the benefit of the program. The cost to maintain the program nationally is 14.4 million.

### **Recommendation #2: Environmental Initiatives**

#### **Background**

Energy shortages, increasing gas prices and changing weather patterns are creating a need for Canadians to cut costs and create energy efficiencies in homes and businesses. Home energy use is the third largest consumer of fossil fuels in Canada. In 2005, according to the Office of

Energy Efficiency, Canadians spent \$152 billion on energy to heat and cool their homes, which represent 15% of total greenhouse gas emissions in Canada. However, many provinces, like Ontario are struggling to maintain the demand for heat, cooling systems and power by businesses and residents alike. The growth of industry within some regions in Canada is also putting a strain for energy resources. In Saskatchewan, the growth of potash mining and the expansion into oil and gas will place significant strain on power consumption in the province. Residents in Saskatchewan are already experiencing the higher power costs and power outages due to heavy energy consumption due to aging and failing infrastructure and an increase in demand due to an expansion of industry, an increase in-migration of workers and a recent increase of 4.5% in energy costs. These factors are triggering alert flags to the affordability and sustainability of our economy.

Renewable energy sources are becoming a more viable alternative to supplement our present energy use. For example: solar and wind power are clean renewable energy sources that are dropping in price and growing in demand. Yet there seems to be a lack of knowledge of how to integrate alternative energies into our economies, homes and businesses. Businesses and residents also need to assist in creating energy efficiencies, reducing waste and greenhouse gases through home renovations, consumer choices and household practices.

Investment in renewable energy sources and environmental education fosters a culture of green business development and innovation among local adult, community and youth entrepreneurs. It leads to a reduction in long-term energy costs, builds toward energy self reliance, creates innovative partnerships, prepares our workforce for green jobs and green entrepreneurship.

In summary, Environmental education programs build and capitalize on the potential for green technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and directly impact climate change. Change only occurs when people understand, embrace and act. Environmental education ensures that individuals, businesses and communities are better prepared to capitalize on the “greening” of our communities and economies, build their environmental skills, and preserve their natural resources for future years. This will help lower the long-term energy costs to provincial and federal governments.

**Recommendation #2:** Set-up a pool of funds to assist small and medium sized non-profits to create environmental awareness programs which educate individuals, groups and businesses about green opportunities, renewable energy sources, community recycling programs and how to create commercial and household energy efficiencies. The cost of this program would be 4.2 million divided equally between the provinces and territories.

**Recommendation#3: Financial Assistance to help rural, remote and First Nation Communities to develop strategic and emergency preparedness plans**

**Background**

Many small rural communities do not have a community plan for economic and social development or an emergency plan. Rural, remote and First Nation communities are struggling with emergency preparedness, aging infrastructure and economic and social development. For example, severe flooding has created a huge strain on aging municipal sewer systems and contaminated municipal water supplies. Many communities do not have the resources to replace aging infrastructure or a plan to deal with such emergencies. Communities need to generate community economic development and emergency plans to sustain their communities and generate jobs and increase future growth. **Recommendation#3: Provide financial assistance to help rural, remote and First Nation Communities develop strategic and emergency plans. This initiative would cost 3.6 million. This would allow 300,000 per province or territory.**

### **Bios**

#### **Cherylynn Walters**

Cherylynn Walters, President and lead trainer for CHS Enterprises Inc., has three degrees from the University of Saskatchewan - Bachelor of Physical Education, Bachelor of Education and a Masters in Business Administration. She is a member of the Entrepreneurial Council for the Provincial Government and a Regional Advisory Council for the University of Saskatchewan. After leaving teaching, Cherylynn spent two years as the Vice President of Marketing for a Saskatchewan Biotechnology company, participating in international business – technology transfer throughout Southeast Asia and India. Cherylynn left the private sector and joined the Business Development Bank of Canada, where she spent just under two years as the Manager of Business Training. During her time with the BDC, Cherylynn developed and implemented programs in ISO 9000, Export Training for New Entrants, Entrepreneurial Training and Community Economic Development.

Cherylynn has owned and operated her own business for over 18 years and for the past 12 years she has been the Chair/CEO of the Marieval Enterprise Center, a cross-cultural business and technology resource center. Cherylynn has been working with entrepreneurs and communities throughout rural Saskatchewan for over 20 years delivering business workshops and community planning sessions. She has been heavily involved in project management, business development and all aspects of technology. Cherylynn Walters is also the Chair/CEO for the Marieval Enterprise Center (MEC) Inc.,

#### **Colleen Stinson**

Colleen is the Manager of Special Projects for the Marieval Enterprise Center Inc (MEC), a non-profit organization in rural Saskatchewan, which focuses on providing technological and work skills development. Colleen manages special projects for MEC and assists in managing the technology development in 68 sites/partnerships in Southeast Saskatchewan.

Colleen has attained an Honours Bachelor of Arts in Comparative Development Studies/minor in Environmental Studies. She also continues to pursue a Masters of Business Administration, in Community Economic Development (CED). Colleen is a scholarship recipient in the MBA (CED) graduate program. She is fluent in English with a working knowledge of both French and Spanish.

### **Marie Prebushewski**

Marie Prebushewski is the Executive Director of the Thickwood Hills Business & Learning Network, a non-profit organization in rural Saskatchewan, which focuses on providing technological and work skills development. Marie has attained a Bachelor of Education and Masters of Education. She is fluent in English and French.

Thickwood Hills Business and Learning Network is comprised of 68 community CAP sites of which 20 are First Nations, 3 are Métis and non-native communities. In conjunction with this network, Marie manages the Aboriginal Business Service Network (ABSN) for the Western half of Saskatchewan. This program assists in the development of Aboriginal small businesses and entrepreneurship. Since 2007, Marie has been successful in introducing co-operatives to First Nation communities in conjunction with some targeted economic development activities. Two co-operatives are now incorporated.

Marie currently serves on the Board of Directors of Telecommunities Canada (TC), which speaks on behalf of the CAP initiative. She is also a member of the National Advisory Board for the Older Adults and Technology Program.

Marie was contracted by the International Finance Corporation in 2001 to deliver courses in Ukraine. From 2002 to 2004, she acted as project manager for an agricultural/community development program in rural Western Ukraine.