



Value Chain Solutions – Heartland Complex Expansion Project

Response from Descendants of Michel First Nations Association

January 12, 2021

We understand that Value Chain Solutions is proposing to expand their Heartland Complex to increase the facility's capacity by three hundred per cent (300%) and this would involve additional buildings, infrastructure and additional water disposal wells.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Summary of Issues. We have reviewed the document as forwarded to us and are pleased to present our response as follows.

Any issue that affects the environment also affects our population. We will, however, focus on the Indigenous components as they are most critical to us. This area is part of our traditional hunting lands and, as such, is greatly valued by us.

Indigenous Consultation and Engagement:

We appreciate the commitment that your organization has made efforts to engage with our community and others. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the dialogue concerning the issues identified. We trust that this commitment to consultation and engagement will continue throughout your activities in our community.

We also appreciate the learning opportunities you provide to your personnel around our traditions and culture. Through activities like this greater understanding is fostered resulting in a more successful integration of our people in organizations like yours. We would ask for clarity on your commitment to maintaining these opportunities regularly in the future, particularly in consideration of the increase in personnel that will be required for this expansion.

DMFNA would also appreciate information about your policies regarding racism and discrimination amongst your organization and employees. Do you provide cultural sensitivity training to your employees?

Indigenous Knowledge:

Whenever traditional lands are lost to us there is a significant loss of the retention of our identity. With development our community is integrated into the urban environment which is not conducive to the relaying of historical Indigenous knowledge, culture and language. Clarity and details on your future participation and support of initiatives to retain these are needed. We know that the

environment and wildlife thrives when it is undisturbed. We also realize the importance of resources. These two concepts deeply contradict each other, but can coincide if the land, air and water is reclaimed with the utmost care and concern for future generations.

Indigenous Peoples' Use of Lands and Resources for Traditional Purposes:

The land you are currently occupying and propose to expand onto is traditional hunting and gathering territory for our nation. We are greatly concerned about the loss of these activities. Many of our young people are now expressing an interest in participating in traditional practises. With the loss of the resources to us it becomes increasingly difficult to access wildlife, water sources, traditional medicines and ceremonial spaces.

Indigenous Peoples' Health and Well-being:

*The health of Indigenous people is intricately related to their ecosystems and the complexities of their social and economic circumstances. They control a wealth of knowledge of their ecosystems, including native foods, that merges with health and healing knowledge embedded into culture and practice.*¹ The loss of additional lands, the disruption to native plants and wildlife, the contaminants that contribute to pollution of the surrounding area all have a detrimental effect on the health and well-being of our people and the wildlife respectively. In addition, with the workers required to initially construct this expansion and then the people required to operate the facility the access to affordable housing and accessible health care will become a greater concern. Affordable housing is already an issue and will be exacerbated with the additional population. With the integration of people unfamiliar with the customs and practices of the Indigenous population the result will be an increase in race and gender-based discrimination and the potential for increased violence. These are two very important issues that need to be addressed and a plan from your organization presented on how you will work towards minimizing the impact.

Indigenous Peoples' Rights:

This project is located on Treaty Six Territory in Fort Saskatchewan, Ab. It will impact our traditional use of the land. How will this impact our use of the land is yet to be determined by the handling of the land reclamation process. Will the land be restored to as close to pristine as possible? What is the over-all plan to ensure the survival of the land, air and water in the immediate area to ensure our nation can continue to use this land as we always have?

Indigenous Peoples' Social and Economic Conditions:

We have been encouraged by the commitment of some industries to employ the Indigenous people and the specific advertising of this opportunity. With these commitments we are seeing the offer of training which is a positive step for our young people. DMFNA would ask for clarity around your position on the job and training opportunities for our population, not only for the men historically employed in these sectors but also for the inclusion of women and youth.

¹ *Public Health Nutrition*, Vol. 9, Issue 8, Dec 2006, p. 1013

What will be done to ensure social cohesion and inclusion? Historically indigenous populations are rooted in poverty and despair. The area is largely populated by settlers and Indigenous people are not always invited or welcomed to share in the prosperity of the land so rich in resources. What will the Government do to ensure the social and economic inclusion of our nation?

Indigenous Peoples' Spiritual, Physical, and Cultural Heritage:

For generations, Indigenous people have lived off of the land. It is part of our physical, spiritual and cultural well-being. We are often referred to as "stewards" of the land. Projects such as this are always concerning to us, as we deeply respect the land and all of its inhabitants. We use the land for hunting, fishing and ceremony. It is of the utmost importance that space is retained for us to continue to be able to utilize and thrive off of the land.

Respectfully submitted.

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