

Improving Quality of Life Through Telecommuting

PRESENTATION TO:

Sustainable Saskatchewan
Saskatchewan Economic Development Association

03 March, 2010

By David Seymour



FRONTIER CENTRE
FOR PUBLIC POLICY

IDEAS HAVE CONSEQUENCES



"My friends, watch out for the little fellow with an idea."

- TOMMY DOUGLAS

THE INDEPENDENT THINK TANK

- No money from government;
- No contract work;
- No “trump card” funders.

“CHANGING TOGETHER FROM AFAR”

- TECHNOLOGY ENABLED;
- A REPLACEMENT FOR TRADITIONAL TRANSPORTATION;
- OUTPERFORMS WALKING AND MASS TRANSIT;
- POTENTIALLY INCREASES EQUITY;
- A BETTER USE OF RESOURCES.

DEFINING TELECOMMUTING

- REPLACING FACE TO FACE NETWORKING WITH REMOTE NETWORKING;
 - CO-WORKERS;
 - CUSTOMERS;
 - EMPLOYERS;
- 23% OF CANADIAN WORKERS TELEWORKED ONE DAY PER WEEK IN 2005.

CONNECTING CHEAPER

- COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY GROWTH IS EXPONENTIAL;
- OTHER FORMS OF GROWTH ARE LINEAR AT BEST.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- U.S. ESTIMATES SUGGEST 14% OF CURRENT JOBS COULD BE CONVERTED TO TELECOMMUTING;
- TRAVEL RELATED TO THIS REDUCTION WOULD EQUATE TO 1% OF U.S. GHG EMISSIONS;
- IPCC SUGGESTS \$20-\$50/TONNE GHG REDUCTION BU TELECOMMUTING IS FREE OR BETTER.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

- ECONOMIC PRODUCTIVITY RELATES TO TRAVEL AND TELECOMMUTING IS A SUBSTITUTE FOR TRAVEL;
- BUSINESSES CAN SAVE ON SPACE TIME AND TRAVEL;
- WORKERS CAN BETTER INTEGRATE THEIR HOME AND WORK ACTIVITIES.

EQUITY

- AS A DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGY TELECOMMUTING HAS THE POTENTIAL TO EMPOWER THE DISADVANTAGED;
- WHOEVER CURRENTLY LACKS; TRANSPORTATION FOR WORK CAN NOW GET IT CHEAPER;
- NOTWITHSTANDING DIGITAL DIVIDE.

BUT IF IT WAS THAT EASY...

- CULTURAL CHANGE IS REQUIRED;
- 14% ABLE TO CONVERT MEANS
86% UNABLE;
- TECH ENABLED MEANS TECH LIMITED.

THE FUTURE

- TELECOMMUTING IS INCREASING;
- TECHNOLOGICAL TRENDS WILL CONTINUE TO ACCELERATE;
- U.S. MIGRATION PATTERNS FAVOUR TELECOMMUTING.

PUBLIC POLICY IMPLICATOINS

- TELECOMMUTING HAS COME FROM NOWHERE WITHOUT PUBLIC POLICY ENCOURAGEMENT;
- THEREFORE MOST CONVENTIONAL PUBLIC POLICY DECISIONS ARE A TAX ON TELECOMMUTING;
- TELECOMMUTING IS A CAUTIONARY TALE FOR PRESCRIPTIVE PLANNERS.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

- TELECOMMUTING IS A NATURAL OPPORTUNITY;
- IT FULFILS THE CRITERIA OF OFFERING ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND SOCIAL BENEFITS;
- YET IT IS A SPONTANEOUS MOVEMENT WHICH WON'T RESPOND WELL TO CONTRIVED PLANS.