

Session #4

The Honourable Charlie Watt

State of the Arctic Economy: Renewable Energy

Wednesday July 18, 2pm

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss Arctic Energy Issues with you today.

My name is Charlie Watt and I'm the newly elected President of Makivik Corporation which represents the Inuit of Nunavik in northern Quebec. Prior to this, I was a Canadian Senator for 34 years serving in Ottawa, our nations capital.

Back in the early 70's I got my start as leader of the Northern Quebec Inuit Association, and was a friend of Eben Hopson.

In the early days, we talked about creating ICC, and he sent Charlie Eetook over to my community in Kuujjauq to have discussions on planning out how we could move this concept forward.

In my mind, energy is strongly linked to the issue of sovereignty. Our self determination in our economic development enhances our self determination in all areas.

- Part of asserting sovereignty is undertaking commercial activities, building our own economies, and we have a huge opportunity to do so with renewable energies
- As we look forward to the Arctic we want, we must shift the focus to creating our own deals with other governments and explore what is possible, and in doing this, perhaps we need to discuss the creation of an Inuit free trade zone across the Inuit homeland and be more aggressive on international trade and take the lead.
- Innovative thinking starts here:
- We have two successful Airline companies (one is celebrating 40 years), and these companies have huge potential to expand
- and as Inuit we should think about how we can use this industry to bring each other together. I'd like to think about one airline that can stretch across our Inuit homeland

- Traditionally our communities were linked by trails across the Arctic waters, land and sea ice, and now we are in the modern era and we can reach across the skies
- Transition to renewable energy will stimulate the Arctic economy, lower the costs of living and most importantly, it will improve quality of life; creating a more prosperous region.
- The successes we have with the airlines can also be experienced with renewable energy

We at Makivik are making investments in renewable energy and we are looking for great business ideas for improving our living standards and our economy.

In my region, we are very fortunate to have access to waterways which can be harnessed for hydro electricity. And, ironically, it was a hydroelectric project which led us to challenge the government, and eventually led to the signing of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement

But in spite of the vast actual and potential hydroelectric power in my region, all 14 Inuit communities north of the 55th parallel employ diesel power plants for electricity.

To move our communities from diesel to hydro,

We are now developing a regionally owned renewable energy company called Tarquti Energy with potential to develop renewable energy projects tailored to the individual Nunavik communities and to provide maximum benefits to the region in terms of capital, job creation, and skills development.

Tarquti is a 100 percent Inuit-owned joint venture. This agreement was signed in 2017 between the two main economic development organizations in Nunavik: Makivik Corporation and Eliageesak (which is also known as the federation of coops)

Because both belong to the Inuit of Nunavik, the profits from Tarquti will benefit both Makivik and Eliageesak and will go back to the Inuit community

The Inuit of Nunavik are determined that future renewable energy production in Nunavik will be with the Inuit via Direct Negotiations to develop Power Purchase Agreements with Hydro-Quebec

We are also working in the area of energy research:

- First, Makivik is working with several partners including Hydro Quebec's research institute (IREQ) to determine the marine hydro-kinetic potential of the Koksoak River and others that have potential to generate electricity

- They are also looking at the effects of the Arctic environment on current technologies (for example, the effect of fragile ice on an underwater turbines)
- We know that further research must also be conducted on the effects of the technology on the environment – like how will an underwater turbine affect fish stocks and marine mammals?

These are just some examples of how our knowledge is important for research and development, and how we are testing new technology against Inuit knowledge.

As Inuit we must always consider the initiatives of outsiders with some skepticism. Our regions must not be used as the playground for companies who want to experiment, and charge us for their preliminary studies.

We must use our knowledge of the land, and the climate, and the complete environment to be critical thinkers and only bring into our communities the initiatives that will be of true benefit to our people – that means selecting business partners with integrity, and innovations that meet our needs in the place where we are.

Sometimes we are tempted to bring in big and complicated solutions, but we should start in our own homes with technology that we understand. For example, our local

hardware store sells solar panels with the capacity to store energy in a battery.

Once we have learned the basics, then we can move forward to larger alternative energy projects.

Conferences like this one, here in Alaska, gives us the opportunity to exchange information and best practices.

We have also started solar energy projects – in Kuujjuaq a 70 Kw Solar installation was installed at the Makivik offices.

And for wind energy, we have purchased MET stations to measure wind and solar.

- This is an exciting new initiative for us, and stations will be installed in 5 communities in the fall of this year
- An additional SoDAR instrument was purchased to determine the effectiveness of wind measurements without towers
- In Europe, SoDAR units are standard practice for wind measurements for renewable energy projects

We are investing in renewable energy because it has tremendous spinoffs for the region.

And through Nunavik Inuit Enterprise, we are growing small locally owned businesses in the areas of maintenance, fabrication and warehousing.

The economic stimulation – is access to alternative and cheaper power options for mining development that currently rely on diesel generators

In 2015, my colleagues at the Senate issued a report that linked sovereignty to a prosperous north, and recommended that Canada should invest in northern communities focusing on investments in energy.

I'm pleased to know that our efforts to develop the north are recognized by Canada as significant not only for us, but to the economic health of the nation.

The Senate connected the prosperity of our communities with Canada's ability to reinforce its sovereignty in the Arctic, against other States:

We are key to Arctic sovereignty. Canada and all Arctic states need to remember that their sovereignty comes through the fact that Inuit have lived in the Arctic for millennia, long before there were ever "States". They are only able to claim "effective occupation" of the Arctic lands because they have partnerships with Inuit.

Inuit expect that these countries honour their partnerships with Inuit. In Canada, these obligations are created by domestic and international law, and are often developed through constitutionally protected Treaties. However, Canada has not always lived up to its obligations. And Canada certainly has not

ensured that our communities are prosperous. Our communities have high rates of poverty and unemployment and face the highest costs of living in Canada.

One way that Canada and other states can support us is by supporting initiatives to ensure Inuit can move ourselves forward. Funding for commercial ventures, for our businesses, such as renewable energy, is a way that Canada can do this.

In conclusion, I urge all of us to think big, and look to a future when we create our own energy and no longer need to be reliant on the existing power grid.

If we can invest in clean and renewable energy sources, we are investing in the long term health of our communities, and laying a solid **economic** foundation for the next generations.

As Inuk leaders, our job is to create opportunity for our young people, and to make thoughtful decisions that will open doors for future generations.

In my region we have taken steps to move towards exercising our sovereignty and self determination. At our last all organization meeting the people decided to move forward with negotiations with the government with the goal of governing ourselves with an Inuit government based on Inuit values and identity .

We are even moving in the direction of re-opening the James Bay and northern Quebec Agreement because we need the royalties to finance our institutions

We are also determined to remove the cede, release and surrender from our vocabulary, and move into a new era

it is our Inuitness which makes us unique, and that is what will make us successful moving forward.

We are claiming what is already ours, and refuse to ask for permission and we will do this in a Nunavik Assembly run by our own people and for the people

Jimmy Stotts reminded us that we are dealing with many of the same issues that we dealt with 40 years ago...but remember

We have made great achievements over the past 40 years.

I have confidence in this group at the 13th ICC General Assembly and I am inspired by your courage and determination to believe it will be much better in 40 years.

We are circumpolar people with shared ancestry, and shared dreams for an Arctic Nation of Inuit. Together we are making steps in this direction of the Arctic we want.

Thank you for allowing me to continue on this journey with you.

Nakurmiik,