

**Testimony of Connie Ova, Vice President
Economic Development Association of North Dakota
September 17, 2015**

Chairwoman Triplett and members of the interim Economic Impact Committee, my name is Connie Ova, and I am the vice president of the Economic Development Association of North Dakota (EDND), and also serve as CEO of the Jamestown/Stutsman County Development Association. On behalf of EDND, I would like to express our willingness to work with you to study and find ways to provide natural gas service to unserved and underserved communities in North Dakota. Communities with access to natural gas have greater economic development opportunities than communities without it. Therefore, the availability of natural gas and the expansion of natural gas infrastructure play a key role in the continued growth and vitality of many businesses, communities and the state.

EDND represents more than 80 state economic development organizations on the front line of economic development efforts throughout North Dakota. The primary purpose of the organization is to support the creation of new wealth and the diversification of North Dakota's economy. Providing natural gas to unserved and underserved communities is one of our legislative priorities, and we recently formed a Natural Gas Committee to promote enhancing natural gas service.

Natural gas is a resource communities must have in order to attract any significant manufacturing opportunity. National site selectors have reported they won't even consider a community for a manufacturing project if it does not have natural gas service. In addition, MDU Resources Group, Inc. and Xcel Energy have completed case studies that illustrate the savings due to natural gas use, and these are available for future presentation to the committee.

It is our understanding that other states, including Washington, Pennsylvania, Minnesota and others, have efforts underway to expand natural gas to underserved or unserved communities, and so may be a resource for this committee's study.

There are several communities represented here today that would benefit from enhanced natural gas service. Jane Priebe, Wahpeton economic development director, will discuss the community's need to expand its natural gas infrastructure, and Paul Geray, chairman of the Hillsboro Economic Development Corporation, will speak on the lost opportunities for the community of Hillsboro due to a lack of natural gas service. Dennis Haider,

executive vice president of business development at MDU Resources Group, Inc., will provide background on natural gas infrastructure and services in North Dakota and answer any questions the committee may have.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter, and we look forward to working with you in the interim on examining the natural gas needs of our state.

Please note the names and contact information below of the EDND Natural Gas Committee, should you have additional questions or if you would like more information. Each of these committee members represent a community impacted by the need for additional natural gas services or infrastructure.

EDND Natural Gas Committee

Grand Forks: Keith Lund - keithl@grandforks.org, 701-746-2722

Jamestown: Connie Ova - connie@growingjamestown.com, 701-252-6861

Harvey: Nicki Weisman - HarveyJDA@harveynd.com, 701-324-2490

Hillsboro: Melissa Beach - director@trailcountyedc.com, 701-636-4746

Hazen: Buster Langowski - hcd@westriv.com, 701-748-6886

Wahpeton: Jane Priebe - janep@wahpeton.com, 701-642-8559

Beulah: John Phillips - jphillips@lssnd.org, 701-873-2110