



NORTHWEST TERRITORIES
POWER
CORPORATION

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July 13, 2009

Bruce Valpy,
Managing Editor,
Northern News Services,
PO Box 2820
Yellowknife NT
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Dear Editor:

RE: Reveal those bonuses

To say that your editorial was misinformed, biased and lacking even the minimum of objective journalistic principles would be an understatement. The Corporation has supplied copies of its At-Risk plan, that you refer to as its bonus plan, to who ever has asked for a copy, including a copy to your newspaper. We have explained to you how the plan works, the total amount paid under the plan and the number of employees who have received the payments.

There is a reason we don't publish personal information about our employees. Simply stated, it is against the law and on July 13th the Supreme Court of the Northwest Territories agreed with us, dismissing an appeal by the Union of Northern Workers for the disclosure of individual payments under the plan.

The At Risk plan was discussed in detail during the last General Rate Application which is a matter of public record. The cost of the performance pay represents less than 0.1% of rates or expressed another way it is less than one tenth of a cent per kWh.

The only thing we have refused to provide are the individual payments as we believed this would violate our employees' right to privacy and violate the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

I am not sure how you can conclude that despite all this disclosure that "the Corporation continues to refuse to explain maddening bonuses paid out." I refer you to a January 26th Guest Comment on this subject from the Corporation's Chairman of the Board.

On July 13th the Supreme Court of the NWT reviewed this matter and agreed with the Corporation's position that the individual payments cannot be disclosed as they are personal information that must be protected. I would submit that following the law is not as your editorial states a "convenient ploy" or "hiding behind its cry for confidentiality".

No matter how loudly you yell about a journalist's right to know, the release of some information is against the law. As a matter of fact the principles of the Canadian Association of Journalists state: "*Individuals have a right to privacy except when that right is superceded by the public good.*"

The principles of the Canadian Association of Journalists also state that you will:

- *Not allow our own biases to influence fair and accurate reporting;*
- *Give people, companies or organizations that are publicly accused or criticized prompt opportunity to respond. We will make a genuine and exhaustive effort to contact them; and*
- *Ungrudgingly publish or broadcast corrections, clarifications or apologies in a consistent way.*

I am perplexed how our At Risk plan gets so much coverage and so much of it is erroneous despite our many attempts to explain it to you. Other companies and government bonus plans are not an issue, overtime pay is not an issue but our at risk plan continues to be.

Your editorial goes on to attack us on rate increases last winter and conveniently forgets that there is another service provider in Yellowknife, Northland Utilities (Yellowknife) Ltd. (NUL).

We sell hydro electricity to NUL at a rate of 15.43 cents per kilowatt hour and have not changed rates since November 1, 2008. You don't get your bill from NTPC. You may want to look to NUL as the source of the 10% increases last winter as they increased rates February 1, 2009. At the same time you may want to enquire if they have a bonus program.

You also attack us for power outages. Again there are two utilities serving Yellowknife and some outages are caused by NUL equipment and NUL also contributes to the restoration time when NTPC has an outage.

Our reliability record is filed with the Public Utilities Board annually and is in fact very high especially when you consider our operating area. Details of outages are posted on our web site.

I am not convinced you met your journalistic principles in this editorial. Nevertheless, NTPC will continue to operate in an open and transparent manner, making all information available up to the letter of the law.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Willows", written over a horizontal line.

Brian Willows,
Chief Operating Officer

Reveal those bonuses

NWT Power Corp hides behind employees in attempt to keep lid on monetary perks

Despite public ridicule and contempt, the NWT Power Corporation continues to refuse to explain mad-denying bonuses paid out to middle and senior managers each year.

The corporation is currently involved in a court battle with the Union of Northern Workers, which is trying to obtain figures on how much managers are getting paid in performance bonuses.

The power corp. argues that revealing this information, even if it's just dollar amounts and not the names, would breach the privacy rights of these employees under

the Canadian Charter of Rights. The corporation's lawyer argues that the public could connect the dots, figure out who these people are and how much each received.

It's a convenient ploy. By hiding behind its cry for confidentiality, the power corp. can avoid all that embarrassing business of having to justify some of these exceptional bonuses, which amounted to more than \$600,000 in

2007, according to MLAs.

The rich payments are tied to profits and can be higher or lower depending on how much money

the power corp. pulls in from its customers. One senior manager made \$155,000 in 2004, \$34,700 of which came in bonuses.

That might stick in the craw of powers users, who in Yellowknife, witnessed at 10 per cent increase on their electricity bills last winter – never mind the continuous and annoying power outages we experience several times each month.

It's no wonder MLAs and the NWT Association of Communities are calling on auditor general Sheila Fraser to audit the power corp.

It's time for this GNWT-owned company to quit this shell game and explain and justify these bonuses to its customers, if it at all can.

THE ISSUE:

Power Corp bonuses

WE SAY:

Stop ducking and start explaining
