Grand Forks
Region ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Testimony of Mr. Keith Lund
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Senate Bill 2020
Senate Appropriations Committee, Education and Environment Division
Bismarck, North Dakota – January 19, 2023

Chairman Sorvag and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Education and Environment Division. My name is Keith Lund, and I am President & CEO of the Grand Forks Region Economic Development Corporation. I am providing written testimony in support of funding for the Red River Valley Water Supply Project in the Department of Water Resources budget contained within Senate Bill 2020.

The Red River Valley Water Supply Project is tremendously important for population and industry growth in North Dakota. The Project will deliver water from the Missouri River to central and eastern North Dakota, which will mitigate the effects of moderate and severe droughts and provide a consistent and reliable water source for many North Dakota communities and rural water systems, which in total serve nearly half of our State's population.

Agriculture is a key economic driver of North Dakota and Agribusiness is a key underpinning of the Grand Forks Region EDC's economic development strategy. Agribusiness and industry cannot exist without adequate water supply. The Red River Valley is one of the best places in the world for production agriculture, and as a result, we have tremendous opportunities to leverage this strength to develop agribusiness and further expand and diversify the State's economy. The agribusiness industry needs a reliable water supply to flourish and our capacity to develop this and other industries will decrease if we are not able to demonstrate a stable water supply.

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I encourage the Committee to develop and appropriate necessary funds to a plan that will complete the project in a reasonable timeframe, ideally less than 10-years. This will avoid costly delays in this inflationary environment and reduce the risk of not having the project serving the needs of nearly half of North Dakota residents and important industry in North Dakota when needed.

Thank you, Chairman Sorvaag, and members of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Education and Environment Division for your service to the State of North Dakota and for the opportunity to provide this written testimony.