

LAKE MANITOBA LAKE ST. MARTIN

OUTLET CHANNELS PROJECT

Summer Update Newsletter - July/August 2023 Issue 21

The coming months will be a very busy time for the proposed Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin Outlet Channels Project. In this issue, we will share updates about important project activities and let communities know what to expect during the summer and fall of 2023.

Environmental Advisory Committee

The Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) is a new group that will include representatives from communities and from Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure (MTI). The purpose of the EAC is to facilitate information sharing and provide advice or recommendations to MTI on ongoing refinement and implementation of the Environmental Management Program. In other words, the EAC will assist in preventing any potential Project-related environmental impacts. Though the environmental assessment regulatory processes are ongoing, through the EAC, communities will have an opportunity to discuss environmental concerns, review environmental management plans and plan for local participation in compliance monitoring during the construction phase of the project through the EAC.

Earlier this spring, the terms of reference for the EAC was distributed to community leadership. More recently, a letter was sent to the Indigenous communities potentially most-affected by the proposed project and the Rural Municipality of Grahamdale, asking each

community to appoint up to two representatives to participate in the EAC. Each community may choose who they would like to represent their community; this could include elected leaders, employees, a consultant or a community member at large. While discussions about the EAC have been underway since 2021, the first official EAC meeting is being planned for summer 2023.

One of the EAC's first tasks will be to decide upon a workplan for itself. In essence, the EAC will decide which topics they are most interested in and what activities the EAC will undertake to reflect the priorities of member communities. MTI has asked the EAC to review the Wetland Compensation Plan and the Fish and Fish Habitat Offsetting Plan with an eye towards identifying potential projects for wetland or fish habitat offsetting. If the EAC chooses to undertake this, they will be able to suggest wetland and fish habitat projects for MTI to complete in order to offset any impacts to existing wetlands or fish habitat that may be caused by the proposed project.

MTI has also proposed that construction compliance monitoring activities can be coordinated through the EAC. This means that the EAC will help to coordinate training and paid employment for community members to monitor and ensure that contractors working on the project follow the practices and procedures identified in the Environmental Management Program. This monitoring work will be an important component of minimizing environmental impacts and ensuring that the project is built and operates as expected.

Stay tuned for more news on the EAC as the group is formed and begins its work this year.





Indigenous Economic Development Fund

The Indigenous Economic Development Fund is a \$15 million fund that aims to support economic initiatives in Indigenous communities affected by the proposed Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin Outlet Channels project.

Between February and May 2023, MTI reached out to the 39 eligible Indigenous communities and representative groups to receive feedback about what they would like the fund to accomplish. The communities were asked where they thought funds should be allocated and which groups should be involved.

MTI processed this community feedback to incorporate it into the plan for the Fund. Communities have shared that they want the Fund to have clear, transparent and fair guidelines. A call for proposals has been issued and MTI looks forward to reviewing them.

As further information becomes available, updates will be shared with community leadership and on the proposed Project's website.

Construction Sequencing

The proposed Project aims to build two channels: one from Lake Manitoba to Lake St. Martin, and one from Lake St. Martin to Lake Winnipeg. Each channel contains several components such as water control structures, drains, and bridges. A summary document is available for review on the proposed Project website. It outlines how MTI plans to proceed with contracted work over the proposed construction period. Previous information on proposed construction sequencing was provided in the July 2021 and January 2022 newsletters.

The plan considers environmental, social and economic factors during the construction process. MTI will address these factors through mitigation plans and regulatory requirements.

More information on the environmental assessment processes and environmental management program is available online at www.gov.mb.ca/mit/wms/lmblsmoutlets/environmental/index.html.

Environmental Approvals and Other Considerations

The current major step for the proposed Project is federal environmental approval through the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada. This is an ongoing process that intends to identify potential environmental effects and make plans to mitigate them wherever possible. The proposed Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin Outlet Channels Project has been working through this process for several years.

MTI recently provided preliminary responses to the Round 2 information requests to the federal agency in May 2023 and submitted formal responses in July 2023. This is a key milestone for the Project, because it shows the department's commitment to addressing concerns from federal regulatory representatives, and most importantly, the communities that may be affected by the Project. Further information about this process can be found on the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada website.

Finally, the Manitoba government would like to acknowledge that some communities have expressed their concern that the proposed Lake Manitoba Lake St. Martin Outlet Channels Project is in some way connected to Manitoba Hydro's water regulation activities. MTI can confirm that the proposed Project is not a Manitoba Hydro-regulated project, and the movement of waters within the proposed outlet channels is not being used for hydro-electric generation purposes.

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter. If you have any questions or concerns, please send us an e-mail at outletchannels@gov.mb.ca