

6.6.10

The Government of Manitoba encourage and mandate Manitoba Hydro to fully and publicly explore the viability of locating alternative energy source infrastructure (wind and solar) on the east side of Lake Winnipeg and create opportunities for east side residents and all Manitobans to benefit from these low-impact energy sources.

6.7 Mining Issues

Mandate

“The east side Round Table consider the potential for mineral development and its acceptability within the various land use zones that may be designated in the planning area.

Mining exploration and development in the planning area continue as per existing established public consultation requirements, environmental review and licensing requirements and other required reviews and permitting processes and procedures.”

Mineral exploration and development within the planning area is manageable within established procedures and approval mechanisms, but requires more attention to local communications and co-operation. Exploration is ongoing to a limited extent, and the mineralized belts are generally well identified. Exploration for diamonds is occurring in the northern part of the planning area, and extensively just north of the planning area boundary. Gold exploration is occurring just north of Red Sucker Lake. An existing mine near Bissett operates periodically. Information sources, maps and reports are available online through the Manitoba government website.

Although the mineral potential and the geology of the southern area are relatively well known and developed, this is not the case with the central and northern areas. Mineral exploration within these areas has been sporadic. This is due, in part, to the relative remoteness and poor access to these areas. It is also due to the fact that the geology of these areas has only been mapped on a reconnaissance level and therefore, it is not known in sufficient detail to prompt intensive exploration. Even though there are mineral occurrences in these areas, they remain among the least prospected in the province, and the mineral potential is poorly understood.

A process has been developed between the government and the minerals sector through which new protected area proposals are screened. This involves a group of mining industry members and other participants, who examine Areas of Special Interest (ASIs) from the perspective of the mineral sector, and determine if a protected area in that location withdraws mineral resources significant to the industry. Where no conflicts arise, there is a green light from the sector. Where conflicts arise, a resolution is negotiated, which sometimes



requires more detailed information about the mineral potential and the ASI. This process has successfully screened the ASIs within the planning area.

In March 2000, the mineral sector, the Government of Manitoba, First Nations groups and other stakeholders developed a Manitoba Minerals Guideline containing the principles that should be followed for building relationships and creating opportunities during the mineral development process. This guide set a standard for how the mining industry and communities on the east side should be co-operating.

Active mineral claims give certain land access and occupation rights to the holder. People in local communities may not realize that these rights of occupation of land by mineral exploration companies are included when mineral claims are staked. Sudden unannounced or unexpected activity by an exploration company near a small community can surprise the local residents. These surprises can and should be avoided through the use of the Manitoba Minerals Guideline.

Despite the Minerals Guideline cited above, there were several observations from communities that mineral exploration activity was occurring in their areas and they had not been informed, and that there was no evidence of local employment opportunities. There were local concerns that mineral exploration may affect trap lines and restrict traditional access to the land. Also, concerns were expressed that access roads used by licensed wild rice producers could be damaged by heavy mining machinery.

It must be recalled that this planning process has not advanced far enough to enable identification of specific land use zones, other than existing protected areas, where mineral exploration and development are excluded.

Recommendations

6.7.1

The East Side First Nations Council develop a consultation process regarding potentially affected peoples and licensees prior to the approval of mineral exploration programs, permits and staking activity.

6.7.2

Mineral exploration and development is an acceptable activity within the planning area, provided that the proposed East Side First Nations Council plays an oversight role in consultation and approval mechanisms, decisions are taken on a case by case basis, and there is local benefit from the activity.

6.7.3

The Manitoba Minerals Guideline (2000) principles for community consultation, information sharing, protecting environmental integrity, policy review and development and creating opportunities be accepted as the starting point for guiding relationships between the minerals industry and communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.



6.7.4

The onus for using the Guidelines falls on both the mining companies and the communities. Even with best efforts, not everyone in a community may be satisfied with the information they receive about exploration or mining activities. As much effort needs to be made within the community to share this information, as is made by the industry to make it available.

6.7.5

Any mining development or mining exploration activity with a permit or license to operate must investigate, identify and mitigate impacts on licensed or permitted activities such as trapping, wild rice propagation, lodges and outfitters, and others. The Government of Manitoba shall work with the East Side First Nations Council to establish a process to ensure sufficient communications between license holders and provide a mechanism to resolve any conflict or disputes that may arise due to competing licensed interests. Conflict resolution by a third party mediator could be a consideration.

6.8 Additional Significant Issues

Mandate

“The government should seek the advice of the round table on any significant issue which might arise during the course of the planning process.”

Research Needs

In the course of this planning activity, and as noted in Section 5.3, it has become evident that several areas of ongoing research are needed to further support Broad Area Planning, and refine management approaches and techniques. One prominent concern is the lack of natural resource data available for the planning area north of the 53rd parallel. There, species inventories, lake surveys, forest inventory and historic and archaeological investigations are all needed to develop better information to support land use decisions. More information is also needed on threatened or sensitive species such as woodland caribou.

A more complete assessment of the research needs in the planning area will be part of the ongoing development of the Broad Area Plan. At this stage, the need for further research is noted.

6.8.1

To assist in developing a better understanding of research needs on the east side, it is recommended that a group of advisors be assembled from various Manitoba research and other institutions. This group could advise government on research needs and priorities. Membership of this group could be drawn from the universities, the Centre for Indigenous Environmental Resources, the Natural Resources Institute, Freshwater Institute, etc.