

10.0 Conclusion

The environmental assessment for this Project examined potential effects on biophysical and socioeconomic components. Biophysical components assessed include climate, noise and air quality, geology and hydrogeology, terrain and soils, aquatic environment, vegetation, wildlife and wildlife habitat, and species of conservation concern. Socioeconomic components assessed include population, employment and economy, traditional land use, designated lands and protected areas, public safety and emergency services, recreation and tourism, regional infrastructure, land tenure and property ownership, provincial and federal crown lands, commercial and residential development, agriculture, commercial resource use, and heritage resources.

The primary mechanism to mitigate potential effects involved the short construction period (six months) during the fall and winter, and a routing process involving studies of the natural and built/socioeconomic environment and including engagement with Indigenous groups, the RM of Portage La Prairie and affected landowners. The Final Preferred Route location was modified based on input and environmental conditions, and is located primarily on or adjacent to agricultural lands and an abandoned railway bed, and crosses several small areas of natural vegetation.

Mitigation measures were developed to address effects that were not avoided by routing. In terms of physical environment effects, such as those relating to soil erosion, air quality and noise, the assessment determined that they will typically be localized and short in duration. Effects to the natural environment in the Project region consist mainly of agricultural land and there are few areas of natural habitat that would be crossed by the Project. Terrestrial habitat is limited to shelterbelts and a rail bed that was highly disturbed historically. There are several wildlife species of conservation concern that may occur in the region, but few natural areas near the transmission line that they could occur. The presence of the transmission line may result in bird-wire collisions, but not at levels that would have measurable effects to regional populations. The route passes in the vicinity of a small area of aquatic habitat, but it is poor quality with a low likelihood of fish presence.

The Project is expected to result in positive economic benefits to the region, through the presence of the workforce, but also indirectly, through facilitating development of industry. There will be a slight increase in traffic associated with the 30-member workforce, but the volume will be low and outside of traditionally heavy traffic periods. Known heritage sites were avoided during the routing process, with measures developed to manage previously un-discovered cultural or heritage resources. The proposed route avoids private residences and there is limited to no recreational, commercial, or indigenous traditional use in the region that may be affected by the Project.

As the proposed route travels primarily on or adjacent to agricultural land there will be effects associated with the inconvenience, nuisance and increased production costs associated with operating farming equipment and crop production. Manitoba Hydro has developed a

compensation policy for landowners that grant an easement for a transmission line right-of-way and for incidental and or physical damages to property during construction.

The environmental assessment includes an evaluation of potential cumulative effects and effects of the environment on the Project, as well as an analysis of potential accidents, malfunctions and unplanned events. It also includes a description of the environmental protection program developed for the Project, including the various roles, communication protocols, and commitments to monitor Project activities and manage potential effects.

Based on the routing process, and the measures developed to mitigate and manage any potential adverse effects, the conclusion of environmental assessment was that the residual effects were predicted to be negligible.