

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS

PROPOSAL NAME: **Manitoba Hydro**
Dorsey to Portage South Transmission
Project
CLASS OF DEVELOPMENT: **2**
TYPE OF DEVELOPMENT: **Transmission Line 155-230 kV**
CLIENT FILE NO.: **5611.00**

OVERVIEW:

An Environment Act Proposal for the project was received on October 15, 2012. The advertisement of the Proposal read as follows:

“A Proposal has been filed by Manitoba Hydro for the construction and operation of the Dorsey to Portage South Transmission Line project. A new 66 km, 230 kilovolt (kV) transmission line is proposed from the Dorsey Converter Station, located 500 m west of the intersection of Provincial Road (PR) 231 and PR 236 northwest of Winnipeg, to the Portage South Station, located 12.5 km southeast of Portage La Prairie. Modifications and additions to the Dorsey and Portage Stations are required as part of the project. Construction is planned for the fall of 2013.”

The Proposal was distributed to the "Transmission" Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) for review and was advertised in the Portage Daily Graphic on Friday, November 2, 2012, and in the Winnipeg Free Press on Saturday, November 3, 2012. It was placed in the following public registries: Conservation & Environment Library, Manitoba Eco-Network, Millennium Library, and the Portage la Prairie Regional Library. Comments were requested by December 3, 2012.

A request for additional information was sent to the Proponent on December 20, 2012. A response was received on January 14, 2013. The request for additional information and the Proponent's response were placed in the public registries.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC:

Following is a summary of comments received from the public pertaining to the environmental assessment of the project. Copies of the original public comments are available in the Public Registries.

Peguis First Nation – Letter dated December 20, 2012

- The Proposal lacks information on traditional ecological knowledge.
- The Proposal does not indicate any potential risks associated with having the transmission line in the same corridor as the existing line.

- Concerns regarding the impact of electromagnetic frequencies (EMF) on health and well being of people and wildlife.
- Concerns regarding the types of herbicides to be used in the ROW, their frequency of application, related toxicity and adverse health effects upon exposure, and potential impacts to surrounding farms, the environment, and wildlife.

Request for Additional Information:

A letter dated December 20, 2012 was sent to Manitoba Hydro by the Environmental Approval's Branch requesting the following:

- a. Describe the potential impacts of electromagnetic frequencies (EMFs) from the transmission line and converter stations on the health and well being of people and wildlife. Include the potential cumulative impacts of dual lines on human and animal health, as well as on sensitive electronic equipment.
- b. Provide information on the types of herbicides to be used in the ROW, their frequency of application, related toxicity and adverse health effects upon exposure, and potential impacts to surrounding farms, the environment, and wildlife.

Proponent's response:

- a. Manitoba Hydro provided a brochure explaining the health effects of Alternating Current Electric and Magnetic Fields. In addition to better understand the effects of EMF on sensitive electronic equipment, GPS Manitoba Hydro commissioned two studies by independent surveyors using various types of GPS technologies directly beneath the two existing Bipole I and II dc transmission lines located in Manitoba's Interlake region. The tests showed no interference with any type of GPS or Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) technology tested, including RTK and other correction systems. The GPS receivers tested continued to operate without interruption at centimeter accuracies regardless of the presence of the dc transmission lines. In theory, the presence of the transmission towers themselves might occasionally attenuate satellite signals related to GPS systems (as do trees), but this was not observed during the testing. Furthermore, a limited series of measurements under a nearby 230-ky ac transmission line also did not affect the performance of the GPS receivers.
- b. The majority of the line will be on agricultural land. It will be the adjacent landowners who will be responsible for vegetation management; therefore Manitoba Hydro will not use herbicides as part of the line maintenance program for this ROW.

Disposition:

The proponent's response adequately addressed the request for additional information. An assessment of risk for the shared corridor is not within the scope of the environmental assessment. The proponent contacted the local First Nations and the MMF to discuss and gather information on the project. Meetings were held with and information was gathered from the Aboriginal groups that responded.

COMMENTS FROM THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

Following is a summary of TAC comments received pertaining to the Proposal. Copies of the original comments from TAC are available in the Public Registries.

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship - Wildlife and Ecosystem Protection Branch

- After reviewing the information provided, Wildlife Branch identifies that the proposed route A1-A2 (also referred to as the Preferred Route), appears to have the least impact on wildlife and wildlife habitat.
- Wildlife Branch is also encouraged to read that the construction work will occur over the winter months, during the time when that activity will have the least affect on wildlife.

Disposition:

No action needed.

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship - Parks and Natural Areas Branch

No comments.

Disposition:

No action needed.

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship - Sustainable Resource & Policy Management Branch and Lands Branch

The Sustainable Resource and Policy Management Branch and the Lands Branch have no concerns in regards to the proposed transmission line. Proposed Routes A-1 and A-2 have minimal effects.

Disposition:

No action needed.

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship - Air Quality Section

No comment. Potential air quality concerns associated with the project are adequately addressed in the submission.

Disposition:

No action needed.

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship - Fisheries Branch

Fisheries Branch has reviewed this proposal to construct a new 66 km, 230-kilovolt alternating current transmission line. The line will originate from the Dorsey Converter Station, located 10 km northwest of Winnipeg and terminate at the Portage South Station, located 12.5 km southeast of Portage La Prairie. Under the preferred route, the proposed transmission line will cross the Assiniboine River, tributaries to the Assiniboine River, the La Salle River and tributaries.

An overview of the Assiniboine and La Salle watersheds was provided including fish species, DFO habitat classification, SARA, riparian vegetation and water quality.

Regarding some of the information in the report, we provide the following comments:

- It was noted in the report that tributaries to the Assiniboine (i.e. First, Second and Fourth) were considered indirect habitat meaning “waterbody does not provide spawning, rearing, feeding, overwintering, or migration habitat but may contribute to downstream habitat through water flow, nutrient transport or drift (invertebrate food items)”. An Aquatic Technical Report “Water Level and Temperature Regime Characteristics of Four Intermittent Prairie Streams in South-Central Manitoba: Implications for Northern Pike Habitat Evaluation Procedures” by Duncan Wain in 2001 noted the presence of northern pike in First Creek and northern pike, white sucker, channel catfish, central mudminnow, freshwater drum and bigmouth buffalo in Second Creek indicating that at least in those years when adequate flow exists these intermittent streams provide spawning, nursery and foraging habitat for indicator and forage fish species.
- Under the SARA information it is noted that no species are listed under the Manitoba Endangered Species Act. Earlier this year Mapleleaf Mussel was listed as endangered under the Manitoba Endangered Species Act.

The EA identified potential direct project effects to habitat as temporary or permanent habitat loss at crossings installed for construction and operation; reduction in water quality due to erosion and sedimentation at watercourse crossings and blockage or reduction in fish passage at watercourse crossings. Indirect effects to habitat was the disruption or destruction of riparian habitat along watercourses and in wetlands.

Although transmission line construction and operation are typically less disruptive to the aquatic environment and the proponent has identified mitigation measures; a table identifying all proposed watercourse crossings linked to a figure illustrating the crossings as well as specific watercourse crossing habitat/riparian details and construction details (tower distance from watercourse, construction crossing requirements – none, ice bridge, proposed window of construction works, mitigation measures, etc.) consolidated in one area would have facilitated the review of this proposal.

The proposal states that towers will be sited as far from waterways as possible and environmentally sensitive areas like the Assiniboine River riparian area will be cleared by hand and according to the Stream Crossing Guidelines for the Protection of Fish and Fish Habitat. We would expect hand clearing to occur anywhere there is an established

riparian area and where feasible, 15 m of riparian area be retained from the high water mark adjacent to 1st and 2nd order creeks and 30 m be retained from the high water mark adjacent to 3rd order and higher streams and rivers.

Specifically for the Assiniboine River crossing the proponent's have decided to double circuit the existing D12P Assiniboine River. Although the existing D12 P towers on either side of the river will need to be replaced with double circuit self supporting lattice steel suspension towers it is our understanding that this will reduce or eliminate the need for any additional ROW and ultimately lessen the alteration of the riparian area.

We did not notice any indication of incorporating erosion and sediment control measures if required; monitoring water quality through TSS measurements or inspecting and monitoring watercourse crossings. Fisheries Branch would like to see a summary of the temporary and transmission crossing inspections, where there were issues, how they were addressed, timeframe and follow up inspections. Ideally it would be best if regional fisheries staff were notified of an issue when it occurs.

Finally there was no information on practices to mitigate against the transfer of foreign biota. We would want to ensure that any equipment that is to be used in or near water and is moved between watershed basins, is visually inspected and cleaned to minimize the potential to transfer foreign aquatic biota.

Disposition:

The comments were addressed in the licence conditions and forwarded to the Proponent for their information.

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship – Office of Drinking Water

I reviewed the above noted EAP for any concerns relating to public or semi-public water systems or health or safety of drinking water. I noted the following:

- Section 5.4.2. “Infrastructure” of the Report notes items such as highways, railways, gas pipelines etc. in the study area. This area also contains a number of buried domestic water supply pipelines belonging to regional water suppliers such as the Cartier Regional Water Coop. Before finalizing the locations of transmission towers, Manitoba Hydro will have to confirm the tower and line locations will not interfere with the regional water pipelines.
- The EAP notes the transmission line will cross the La Salle River upstream from the Sanford Regional Water Treatment Plant. The LaSalle River is the raw water source for this water treatment plant. As such, contact information for the Sanford Regional Water Treatment Plant should be included in the emergency and contingency plans for the project with instructions that, should any spill of hazardous material into the LaSalle River occur during or after construction of the project, the plant operators at the Sanford Regional Water Treatment Plant should be contacted immediately.

Beyond these points, the Office of Drinking Water sees no other potential cause for concern respecting public water quality or safety with the proposed development.

Disposition:

The comments were forwarded to the Proponent for their information.

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship – Water Use Licensing Section

No concerns.

Disposition:

No action needed.

Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship - Environmental Compliance and Enforcement

Central Region:

I have reviewed this document. The transmission line may affect livestock operations however it does not seem to affect operations ability to continue reasonably normal manure handling procedures. The transmission line may run through some fields that are used in MMP.

Western Region:

No comments other than that potential concerns were addressed in the submission.

Disposition:

No action needed.

Manitoba Culture, Heritage, Tourism and Sport – Heritage Resources Branch

The Historic Resources Branch has concerns with regard to this project's potential to impact heritage resources. A Heritage Resource Impact Assessment was completed for this project (Appendix 11.5). It was recommended that further archaeological investigation will be required once tower locations have been identified near stream crossings. This recommendation should be included as a condition of the Environment Act Licence.

Disposition:

This comment was addressed in a licence condition.

Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation

- A permit from MIT is required for any construction above or below ground level within 38.1 m (125 ft) from the edge of any Provincial Road's right-of-way or 76.2 m (250 ft) from the edge of any Provincial Trunk Highway's right-of-way.

- Based on the indicated alignment, MIT would like to remind the proponent that it is always the Department's preference to have utility crossings under roadways. The Department recognizes this is not always possible and, in such cases, the preference is that these crossings be accomplished perpendicular to the roadway alignment and that angular crossings be avoided whenever possible.

Disposition:

The comments were forwarded to the Proponent for their information.

Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA)

In July 2012, the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012* (CEAA 2012) came into force. CEAA 2012 focuses federal reviews on those project proposals that have a greater potential for significant adverse environmental effects in areas of federal jurisdiction. The Regulations Designating Physical Activities identify the physical activities which, if carried out individually or in combination, constitute a "designated project" that is subject to the requirements of CEAA 2012.

Based on the information provided by Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship, the project referred to above does not appear to meet the definition of a "designated project" under CEAA 2012.

Please note that the proponent is responsible for confirming its federal regulatory responsibilities in developing its project, including confirming whether its proposal is described on the Regulations Designating Physical Activities under CEAA 2012. Please advise the proponent to review the regulations (<http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/regulations/SOR-2012-147/index.html>) and contact the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency if its proposal meets the definition of a designated project.

As the Agency will only be involved in the review of designated projects, no formal federal coordination exercise has been undertaken for this file. However, the Agency has copied Environment Canada, and Transport Canada on this correspondence for information purposes. Any federal authorities that would like to see the project proposal should contact Elise Dagdick directly (204-619-0709, elise.dagdick@gov.mb.ca).

PUBLIC HEARING:

There were no requests for a public hearing. A public hearing is not recommended.

CROWN-ABORIGINAL CONSULTATION

An Initial Assessment and Record of Conclusion was completed for this project. This report concluded that Crown-Aboriginal Consultation is not required as the project is not

expected to infringe upon or adversely affect the exercise of an Aboriginal right or treaty right. The project is to cross only private cultivated lands (and a small privately owned wooded area), municipal right-of-ways, and stream/river crossings that already have a transmission line crossing at the same location. Any potential rights based activities along the transmission line route would occur beside a transmission line regardless of whether this project proceeds; therefore there would not be any additional impacts to the exercise of these rights as a result of the project.

Peguis First Nation has indicated that only the Dorsey Converter Station is located in their TLE notification area. Modifications to the station will only occur within the already fenced area owned by Manitoba Hydro. Therefore the project should not affect any future TLE land acquisitions by Peguis First Nation. The project is located within Peguis First Nation's traditional lands, however as mentioned above, the project is not expected to affect the exercise of an Aboriginal right or treaty right.

However, Peguis First Nation requested that they be Consulted regarding this project. The Crown's duty to consult prior to making Crown decisions that might adversely affect the exercise of Aboriginal and treaty rights is an evolving duty that must be responsive to new information and concerns expressed by First Nations, Métis communities and other Aboriginal communities. Therefore, the First Nation was consulted regarding the project.

RECOMMENDATION:

The comments received on the Proposal can be addressed as conditions of licensing for the project, or have been forwarded to the Proponent for their information. Therefore, it is recommended that the Development be licensed under The Environment Act subject to the limits, terms, and conditions as described in the attached Environment Act Licence. It is further recommended that enforcement of the Licence be assigned to the Central Region prior to construction.

PREPARED BY:

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