

Round One the Public Involvement Program for the Keeyask Generation Project

Round One Public Involvement Program (PIP) activities occurred between June 2008 and November 2008, focusing on communities in northern Manitoba and potentially interested/affected organizations.

Round One initiated the PIP for the project and its purpose was to:

- Introduce the public to the proposed project;
- Learn about any issues or concerns the public had about the project; and
- Hear from the public how they wished to be consulted in future rounds of the PIP.

In consideration of summer holidays and preference expressed by Environmental Non-Government Organizations (ENGOS), a three-month pause occurred between the initial and the final set of events. In total, meetings were held with the leadership in 12 communities, followed by public information sessions for their respective members in eight of the communities. Public open houses were held in Thompson and Brandon and two in Winnipeg. There were also four meetings held with interested organizations, one workshop in Winnipeg with ENGOS, and another workshop held in Thompson for resource and recreation user organizations. After Round One was completed additional meetings were held with organizations that expressed an interest in meeting to discuss the project (e.g., Norway House Fishermen's Co-op and the Nature Conservancy of Canada). Table 1 provides a summary of the PIP events held for Round One.

Table 1: Round One PIP Events

Date	Event	Location
Council and Community Meetings		
6/10/2008	Thompson Mayor and Council	City Hall
6/17/2008	Churchill Mayor and Council	Council Chambers
6/17/2008	Churchill Community Information Session	Pioneer Gallery
6/18/2008	Leaf Rapids Mayor and Council	Council Chambers
6/18/2008	Leaf Rapids Community Information Session	Town Centre Complex
6/23/2008	Gillam Mayor and Council	Council Chambers
6/23/2008	Gillam Community Information Session	Recreation Centre
6/24/2008	LGD Mystery Lake	LGD Office Thompson
7/2/2008	Thicket Portage Mayor and Council	Council Office
7/2/2008	Thicket Portage Community Information Session	Administration Building
7/8/2008	Pikwitonei Mayor and Council	Recreation Centre
7/8/2008	Pikwitonei Community Information Session	Recreation Centre
7/9/2008	Wabowden Mayor and Council	Town Office
7/9/2008	Wabowden Community Information Session	Ke Na Now Centre
7/15/2008	Norway House Mayor and Council	Community Administration Building
7/15/2008	Norway House Community Information Session	Fort Island Arena
7/16/2008	Nelson House Mayor and Council	Community Administration Building
10/8/2008	Cross Lake Mayor and Council	Town Office Cross Lake
10/8/2008	Cross Lake Community Information Session	Recreation Centre
10/30/2008	Ilford Mayor and Council	Town Office
Workshops		
11/18/2008	Winnipeg ENGO Workshop	Radisson Hotel
11/26/2008	Thompson Recreation & Resource User Workshop	St. John's United Church

Open Houses		
6/24/2008	Thompson Open House	St. John's United Church
6/25/08	Winnipeg Open House 1	Radisson Hotel
6/26/08	Winnipeg Open House 2	Radisson Hotel
6/26/08	Brandon Open House	Royal Oak Inn
Meetings with Organizations		
6/4/2008	Manitoba Metis Federation	MMF Winnipeg Office
6/27/2008	Northern Association of Community Councils	Marlborough Hotel
12/16/2008	Keewatin Tribal Council	Thompson Office
4/9/2009	Nature Conservancy of Canada – Winnipeg Office	NCC Office
4/30/2009	Norway House Fishermen's Co-op	Radisson Hotel, Winnipeg

Manitoba Hydro contacted and offered to meet with other potentially affected people in the Northern Manitoba Region. These offers were either declined or deferred until future rounds of engagement. This included offers to meet with the Chief and Council members in Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, Norway House First Nation, O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation and Shamattawa First Nation, as well as Mayor and Council and community of Granville Lake. Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) expressed interest in the project, but declined to meet until more information about potential environmental effects is available. Manitoba Hydro will approach these groups again in subsequent rounds of engagement.

Public Involvement Events Format

A variety of public involvement methods were utilized during Round One including meetings, workshops, open houses, newsletters, information panels and a project website.

Informal meetings with community leadership provided an opportunity to introduce the project, the environmental assessment (EA) process and initiate dialogue about potential project issues and concerns. A brief presentation on the project was provided by the EA Study Team to the leadership in each community. Throughout and following the discussion, meeting participants were encouraged to ask questions, offer perspectives, and identify any issues or concerns they might have about the proposed project, the EA and the PIP. The discussion was recorded by a member of the EA Study Team and these notes were later reviewed by meeting participants for accuracy. Finalized meeting notes will be included in the PIP Supporting Volume of the EIS.

Community information sessions were held in most communities following the informal meetings with leadership to inform and dialogue with interested community members. Newsletters, public notices (posters) and letters confirmed the events well in advance of community information sessions to ensure that adequate notice was provided to communities. Those who attended the information sessions were encouraged to sign-in, complete comment forms and discuss with members of the EA Study Team any perspectives/issues they might have about the project. Members of the EA Study Team also offered to guide community members through a series of information panels designed to provide participants with information about the project. Comment forms allowed participants to provide comments anonymously, and if questions were raised that could not be addressed at the session, they were recorded by a Study Team member, forwarded to the appropriate person to respond to the request and followed up as required.

Public open houses were held in Winnipeg, Thompson and Brandon to provide opportunities for the broader public to learn about the project and contribute to the process. Public open houses were advertised in the local newspapers and on local radio stations. Formatted similar to the community information sessions with information panels, participants were encouraged to sign-in, fill out comment forms and speak to members of the EA Study Team about any perspectives/issues they might have about the project. Documentation from the open houses and community information sessions, identifying questions or perspectives raised in discussion with the EA Study Team, will be included in the PIP Supporting Volume of the EIS.

Workshops were held with participants individually identified and invited to participate because of project-specific interests. At these workshops, participants were able to review the project information panels shown at open houses and community information sessions, discuss the project informally with EA Study Team members, listen to presentations by the EA Study Team, and participate in a facilitated question and answer period and round table issues identification session where participants were encouraged to present their issues and concerns. Workshop participants were also encouraged to fill out comment forms if they so desired. Workshop meeting notes from each of these sessions were drafted and reviewed by participants. Finalized workshop meeting notes will be included in the PIP Supporting Volume of the EIS.

Meetings with Organizations were held with the Manitoba Metis Federation, the Northern Association of Community Councils, Keewatin Tribal Council, Nature Conservancy of Canada and the Norway House Fishermen's Co-op. Each organization was informed about the project and informal dialog ensued. Participants were encouraged to fill in comment forms or raise specific questions with the EA Study Team members. Finalized meeting notes were shared with the organizations and will be included in the PIP Supporting Volume of the EIS.

A **project website** (www.hydro.mb.ca/projects/keeyask) was developed to distribute information about the project to the general public. The website includes overview information about the EA process, copies of the Round One newsletter and open house information panels, and other project information including links to the Joint Keeyask Development Agreement (JKDA) and Adverse Effects Agreements for each of the First Nation partners. Visitors are able to directly submit questions, comments, or issues about the project and the website is monitored for visitation activity and usage. The website, active since early July 2008, will be maintained until the completion of the EA process.

Key Issues and Perspectives

The following highlights the issues and perspectives identified during Round One of the PIP. The information has been organized into general Project related headings to contribute to the environmental assessment process. The comments below are not verbatim, but reflect the issues and perspectives identified at the PIP events.

Project Planning Issues and Perspectives

- Communities were generally supportive of a potential partnership between Manitoba Hydro and the Keeyask Cree Nation (KCN) communities.

- Some communities questioned why KCN communities had an opportunity to become project partners with Manitoba Hydro while other communities were not provided that same opportunity - this was not perceived as equitable.
- Northern Affairs communities were worried about a lack of training and employment opportunities for their respective community members since they are not part of the partnership.
- Some communities expressed a desire to have a training facility similar to ones in other northern communities to prepare those who might be interested in gaining employment on the project without having to leave home.
- Potential labour shortages were noted if Wuskwatim and/or Conawapa construction was to overlap with Keeyask.
- The need for more hydro-electric generation was questioned by some members of the public (i.e., domestic vs. export needs).
- The integration of Aboriginal traditional knowledge and western scientific knowledge in the EA was viewed as important.
- There was confusion regarding why the EA and regulatory processes were undefined considering the amount of work that has been completed on the project to date.
- The assessment of cumulative effects needs special attention in the EA since there are other projects (past and future) near the proposed site.
- Some individuals were of the opinion that the Bi-Pole III project should be included in the Keeyask EA process as opposed to it being a separate project.
- A decommissioning plan for the Keeyask Generation Station should be included in the EA.
- Some individuals asked the proponent to remember that the project is being built where they live.
- A concern was expressed that local needs assessment should be done by local people.

Project Training and Employment Issues and Perspectives

- Communities were positive about potential employment and training opportunities associated with the project.
- There were questions and concerns about long work rotation schedules; suggestion to have shorter work rotations so workers could minimize the amount of time they would have to spend away from home.
- Some smaller communities were worried if members received training away from home that they would not return to their community.
- Access to timely information about project training and employment opportunities for non-invicinity communities was viewed as important.
- Some communities noted difficulties with the hiring process for the Wuskwatim Generation Project that should be improved for Keeyask if it is constructed.
- An individual commented that northern people should be trained to be managers, not truck drivers. The northern people should be hired for the duration of the project, not seasonally.

Project Construction Issues and Perspectives

- First Nation cross-cultural training for workers at the Keeyask work camp was encouraged, as well as ceremonies at key project milestones.
- Some northern communities suggested to Manitoba Hydro that their communities could be used as work camps.
- Preference for construction contract opportunities should be given to local companies.

Physical Issues and Perspectives

- Concerns were raised about how the project may contribute to additional shoreline erosion.
- Concerns were raised about how much the Project would affect Split Lake water levels
- Members of the public were curious how climate change would be integrated into the assessment studies and noted its importance.
- Members of the public were curious as to whether there would be changes to Lake Winnipeg water levels and/or flows on the Nelson River as a result of the project.
- An individual expressed concern that air pollution should be addressed.

Aquatic Issues and Perspectives

- Concerns were expressed about the effects of project flooding on sturgeon.
- Potentially elevated mercury levels caused by project flooding were concerns of many northern communities. Would like to see less effect from mercury on people's lives.
- Sensitive species such as sturgeon should be studied carefully given their importance to people in the region.

Terrestrial Issues and Perspectives

- Concerns were expressed about the effects of project flooding caribou.
- Sensitive species such as caribou should be studied carefully given their importance to people in the region.
- An individual said that the dam should not be built, and that it is bad for the environment, especially the animals. All lands are sacred and should not be flooded to sell electricity to the United States.

Socio-economic and Heritage Issues and Perspectives

- Increased traffic volumes during project construction were identified as a safety issue (e.g., Thompson, PR280).
- Concerns were noted about deteriorating road conditions from construction activities.
- Concerns were raised about potential crowding of schools and other infrastructure and services in neighbouring communities as a result of an influx of workers during project construction.
- There were social concerns regarding workers travelling to neighbouring communities during time off from work (e.g., Gillam, Thompson).
- Concerns were expressed about the effect of northern community members leaving home to work at Keeyask on their families and culture/traditional way of life.
- Signage for open water navigation and winter ice trails was suggested as a safety measure.

- Concerns were noted about waste management and disposal during construction of the project
- Some people raised concerns about how much land would be flooded and how this would affect their way of life.
- A question was asked about how the burial grounds along the river would be addressed.
- Project effects on resource users (e.g., trappers) and cultural sites (e.g., burial sites) need to be considered in the EA.
- Suggestion was made to package the archaeological material and make it available for schools and communities.

Comments about the Consultation Process

- Communities appreciated the opportunity to learn about the project and to provide their perspectives.
- Participants noted the need to ensure presentations and documents are in plain language to appeal to a wide audience; visual aids/models are good means of communicating difficult concepts. Would like information like the storyboards in the handouts.
- People appreciate it when there are members of northern Cree Nations participating in the meetings to speak on behalf of the northern community members.
- Manitoba Hydro was encouraged to communicate with high school students in communities visited for the PIP to inform them about potential training and employment opportunities.
- It is important to provide information to members of the public on a timely basis and to showing up in a community for consultation when other community events are happening.
- Early public involvement is important so people have an opportunity to offer their perspectives on the project.
- A suggestion was made to have more information on job opportunities and training associated with the Project for Round Two.
- PIP events should be advertised at the local stores and radio stations in communities, if possible.
- Results from the PIP discussions should be made available to members of the public.
- A graphic illustration of flood zones would be useful for Round Two of the PIP.
- A suggestion was made to produce a project overview document in Cree for those community members who do not speak or read English.
- A suggestion was made to produce a project overview DVD in Cree and English and to make it available to members of the public and distribute it in potentially affected communities. DVD could include videos of the project site and examples of environmental change.
- A suggestion was made to have more meetings in the communities, to meet with elders and to provide information to Aboriginal people in the north and in Winnipeg.
- Some people suggested sending more information by mail to people's homes in the project region.
- People would like more information about how the generators work and what resources they require when the dam is operational.
- Provide more information about the plans to address the potential negative effects of the project.

- It was suggested that the Chief and Council members should not be involved in the project after the agreements were signed.

Impacts/issues From Past Hydroelectric Development and Other Non-Keeyask Related Issues and Perspectives

- A concern was expressed about the adequacy of communications between First Nations receiving education and training away from home and their communities regarding potential employment opportunities in their community and on projects. Recent experience with this has resulted in lost job opportunities for some northern residents.
- Many questions were asked about the status and location of Manitoba Hydro's Bipole III project.
- Many questions were asked about Manitoba Hydro's plans for the Conawapa project.
- Perspectives were offered regarding how changes to climate have started to impact northern communities (e.g., new insect species, migration of deer further north than in the past).
- Commitments of Manitoba Hydro to address past project effects should be fulfilled prior to undertaking any new development.