

Manitoba Hydro projects are being reviewed, planned, licensed

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Manitoba Hydro, a publicly owned utility, is planning to spend \$20 billion for new projects. The Manitoba government is proceeding with this expansion without an energy plan for the province. Several existing Manitoba Hydro projects require licensing under the Water Power Act and/or the Environment Act. Churchill River Diversion (CRD) and Winnipeg River generation projects are operational through 35 years or more of interim licences. One project requires renewal of an existing final license or decommissioning; another upgrades an existing generation facility, which needs new environmental licences. Public review of the projects from the 1970s has never occurred. The Churchill River Diversion (CRD), which includes several dams, only has interim hydropower licences, and no environmental licences. The CRD should have public review and hearings so final licences are in place. The CRD review process has been ongoing for 2 years, held behind closed doors. Hydro projects are subject to Section 35 consultations with Aboriginal people, while most also require Northern Flood Agreement consultations. After the Wuskwatim hearings in 2004 Manitoba's Clean Environment Commission recommended the interim licensing situation for Hydro projects be resolved before any new projects are licensed. Certain of these projects will involve federal assessments because of federal Crown responsibilities in the project. Wuskwatim was the first Hydro project in Manitoba to receive a detailed environmental review, and licence (both for transmission and dam).

1. Lake Winnipeg Regulation (LWR) – A 1970 interim licence and a 1972 supplementary interim licence under the Water Power Act allowed construction of Jenpeg dam and regulation of Lake Winnipeg water levels to serve as a reservoir for generation stations on the Nelson River. Jenpeg began operation in 1976 and has operated with an interim license since. In December 2010 Manitoba Hydro applied for a final license under Manitoba's Water Power Act. In July 2011 the Manitoba government announced the Clean Environment Commission (CEC) would hold

public hearings about regulation of Lake Winnipeg.

2. Churchill River Diversion (CRD) – In 1972 an interim Water Power Act licence was issued to connect the Nelson and Churchill Rivers via the Burntwood River system to store and supply water for hydroelectric generation. The CRD became operational in 1977 and has continued under interim licenses since. Manitoba Hydro applied to Manitoba Water Stewardship for a final 50-year license for the CRD May 2009. To date no public open houses have been held, and little public information regarding licenses for the CRD is available.

3. Grand Rapids Generating Station – The first interim Water Power Act license to construct three turbines on the Saskatchewan River at Grand Rapids was issued in 1965. A supplementary interim licence to construct a fourth turbine was issued in 1968. The Grand Rapids generating station was issued a final license in 1975, with a January 2, 2015 expiry date. Manitoba Hydro made a request to Manitoba Stewardship to renew the final licence for another fifty years December 17, 2010.

4. Pointe Du Bois Modernization Project – Manitoba's oldest hydro generation station, first built in 1911, is being upgraded and modernized. This upgrade project is split into several smaller projects and licences. (Pointe Du Bois Modernization, Pointe Du Bois Electrical Transmission Upgrades, Slave Fall Tramway), requiring several Environment Act licences, and possible amendments to the current Water Power Act licence.

5. Pine Falls, Seven Sisters, and MacArthur Falls Generating Stations – Three of Manitoba's older Winnipeg River hydro generation stations, built between 1932 and 1955, operate on short-term extended waterpower licences, which expire in 2015.

6. Keeyask Generating Station – Manitoba hydro plans to build the \$5.6 billion, 695 megawatt hydro generation station at Gull Rapids (725 kilometres northeast of Winnipeg) on the lower Nelson River. An Environ-

mental Assessment Proposal Form (EAPF) was submitted to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA) August 31, 2011. The targeted in-service date is 2019-21; construction is expected to last 7-8 years, after all licensing steps. According to the Manitoba Hydro website: "Public hearings are expected." There is no public schedule regarding the Environment Act, CEC, and Water Power Act proceedings for this project. This project will require additional transmission.

7. Conawapa Generating Station – Manitoba Hydro plans to build the \$7.7 billion, 1485 megawatt, Conawapa Generating Station on the lower Nelson River about 90 kilometres downstream from Gillam. The earliest possible in-service date is 2023. Construction would take 8 to 8.5 years after all regulatory approvals and licences are in place. If constructed Conawapa would be the largest hydro generation facility in Manitoba. This project will require additional transmission.

8. Bipole III Transmission Project – The Bipole III corridor will be separate from Bipole I & II, which run parallel to each other in the same corridor, and is being built to enhance energy reliability, and security. Manitoba Hydro submitted a Draft Environmental Assessment Scoping Document (EASD) to Manitoba Conservation, Environmental Assessment and Licensing Branch (EALB), December 14, 2009. Following public review the EASD was finalized June 2010. An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was originally expected June 2011, has been delayed, and is expected to be submitted for public review by the end of 2011. The project is all new transmission in a new corridor.

9. New Transmission to the U.S. – Would need to be constructed to meet upcoming US export obligations, by 2019-20. The estimated cost for the project is \$200 million. It is unclear if and when a licence will be sought, or the anticipated dates for construction.

Currently Manitoba First Nations affected by existing or intended Hydro projects are wondering when and how public reviews and public information will happen. During the

Wuskwatim proceedings many First Nation communities and organizations received funding to be able to participate in the Clean Environment Commission proceedings. That funding and participation were precedent setting.

Now several projects are moving into the review and licensing system at the same time. It is time for the Crowns to be honourable. With back dated licenses being sought, Manitoba, Manitoba Hydro, and Canada (where there are federal responsibilities) must make sure that First Nations have the capacity to participate in reviews, hearings, and decision making. Back dating licenses means the entire history for these projects are included in reviews and decisions. No reviews and interim licences for 35 years is also bad for business. Changes to the Water Power Act, the Environment Act, cumulative assessments, and open, thorough hearings are needed for decision going forward.



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Best wishes for a
peaceful, happy holiday season
and
we wish you all the best in the
New Year!



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