3.0 Public engagement process

3.1 Purpose, goals and objectives

Manitoba Hydro undertook a public engagement process (PEP) that began in 2016 and will continue through regulatory, construction and operational phases of the Project. The purpose of the engagement process was to collect feedback to inform the environmental assessment processes including transmission line routing. Details are provided in Public Engagement Report Technical Report in Appendix B.

Manitoba Hydro's PEP for the environmental assessment processes was an important factor in determining a final preferred route that balances perspectives on the landscape and limits the overall effect of the Project. Manitoba Hydro undertook a two round approach to the PEP. Round 1 of the process began in November 2016, and Round 2 began in April of 2017. The goals of the PEP were as follows:

- Share information;
- Gather and understand local interests and values;
- Integrate interests and concerns into the assessment process; and
- Discuss potential mitigation measures.

These goals were met by:

1. Involving the public and Indigenous communities throughout environmental assessment stages including route selection;
2. Providing clear, timely, and relevant information and responses;
3. Delivering engagement processes that are adaptive and inclusive;
4. Informing the public and Indigenous communities as to how their feedback influenced the Project; and
5. Documenting and reporting on feedback received.

In addition, the PEP aimed to understand local values and priorities of community members in their municipality. Information on interests and preferences were collected and were provided to municipal councils to share what Manitoba Hydro learned regarding the values of their constituents.

3.2 Process methods

3.2.1 Overview

Numerous different methods were used to identify interested parties, notify those potentially interested and to document feedback through engagement activities. The various mechanisms to share information on the Project included the following:

- Identification of stakeholders;
- Development of Project newsletter;
- Notification through direct mail outs, emails and telephone calls;
- Establishment of a Project website;
- Development of a Project information line and email address;
- Landowner Information Centre; and
- Stakeholder meetings.

3.2.2 Identification of stakeholder groups

For this project, stakeholder groups were identified and invited to participate based on their potential interest in the area. Over 80 groups were invited to participate and included groups from:

- Technical Advisory Committee (such as Manitoba Infrastructure, Sustainable Development, and Sport, Culture and Heritage Departments);
- Local Municipal Councils (Prairie View, Russell-Binscarth, Ellice-Archie, Riding Mountain West);
- Wildlife groups (such as the Russell Game and Fish Association)
- Manitoba Association of Community Pasture Managers (Spy Hill and Ellice-Archie);
- Environment groups (such as the Nature Conservancy of Canada and Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation);
- Agricultural groups (such as Keystone Agricultural Producers and Beef Producers of Manitoba);
- Resource users (such as Torc Oil and Tundra Gas);
- Recreation groups (such as the Valley Recreation District and Trail

Associations); and

- Conservation Districts (Upper Assiniboine and Lake of the Prairies).

Outside of these groups, landowners and meter holders were notified and invited to participate in any manner they were comfortable with throughout the engagement process.

3.2.3 Information sharing

3.2.3.1 Project newsletters

Project newsletters were developed for each round of engagement and provided information on the Project description and location (including a map of the preferred route and alternatives), a summary of the routing and regulatory approvals process, and contact information for any follow up or questions. The newsletters can be found in Appendix B.

3.2.3.2 Project website

A Project information web page was developed on the Manitoba Hydro website (https://www.hydro.mb.ca/birtle). The Project website was used to provide Project information and to provide notification of public events. Methods to contact Manitoba Hydro, Project materials and Project mapping were available for use and review outside of public engagement activities.

3.2.4 Notification methods

A variety of notification methods was used throughout the PEP to inform the public regarding the determination of the preferred route, as well as the date, time and location of upcoming engagement activities, including:

- Letters;
- Postcards;
- Posters;
- Newspaper advertisements; and
- Email notices.

Letters were sent at the beginning of each round to landowners and meter holders within the route planning area. These letters included time and location of public events, a newsletter, Manitoba Hydro contact information and a map (localized and overview).

Unaddressed post cards were sent to postal codes within the route planning area and included the communities of Birtle, Foxwarren, St. Lazare and Binscarth. Postcards were also developed and mailed and these had an overview graphic map of the Project, location of the public events and contact information. In addition, posters were placed around communities in the area in high traffic areas such as the local post office or municipal office. Similar to the postcards, the newspaper advertisements had an overview graphic map of the Project, location of the public events and contact information. Manitoba Hydro used the Russell Banner and Crossroads This Week. Email notices were sent out to those who signed up to receive Project updates when new information became available.

3.2.5 Engagement activities

Engagement activities undertaken as part of the PEP to collect feedback from members of the public included:

- A landowner workshop;
- An open house; and
- Several landowner information centres.

The aim of the landowner workshop was to present Project information, including the proposed alternative routes, and to understand local values and concerns of landowners in relation to routing and the environment. The open house displayed Project information on a series of storyboards, maps, and informational brochures throughout the room. The storyboards provided Project details with graphics, a prioritization exercise, and two mapping stations at each event; community mapping and natural feature mapping. Participants viewed the information and had discussions with each other and with Project team members. Feedback was collected on note pads, maps and more formally with an exit survey that was provided for participants to complete. The landowner information centers (LICs) were structured as drop-in events. Each landowner who attended the LIC met one-on-one with a representative. Each landowner had the opportunity to pose questions and express concerns about the preferred route. Landowner discussions were documented on a Landowner Questionnaire that asked landowners specific information about their landholdings. Meetings were held with various groups to understand their concerns and to capture their feedback for consideration in the environmental assessment and transmission line routing processes.

3.2.6 Feedback methods

In addition to notes taken during discussions, options provided for feedback included:

- A workshop workbook;
- A landowner questionnaire; and
- An exit survey.

In Round 1 workshops, landowners completed workbooks as a group to document concerns, preferences, and values of their municipality. Landowner questionnaires were completed one-on-one with landowners during the landowner information centres and focused on topics such as residence, agriculture, wildlife, use of the land, and access or limitations. An exit survey was provided to each participant at the open houses and workshops to share their feedback regarding the Project.

3.3 Public engagement understandings

3.3.1 Overview

This section is organized into summary outputs for each of the two PEP rounds, a summary of input specific to the route and border crossing selection, and an overall summary of key concerns.

3.3.2 Round 1 feedback

Round 1 (beginning in November 2016) aimed to share information and collect feedback regarding various alternative route segments from Birtle South Station to the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border (Map 3-1). The following was undertaken for Round 1 of the PEP:

Table 3-1: Round 1 feedback

Method	Number of participants/pieces
Postcards	1,059
Posters	12
Landowner letters	264
Number of workshops /open houses	3/3
Number of open house participants	40+
Number of workshop participants	42
Landowner workbooks completed	35

Exit surveys completed	17
Number of stakeholder meetings	9*

**One meeting had over 18 participants from various government departments*

Throughout Round 1, the predominant feedback heard from participants was the importance of the agricultural land and rural residential areas surrounding the alternative route segments. Many indicated a preference for the line to travel through the Spy Hill-Ellice Community Pasture to minimize effects on agricultural lands. Other feedback included using road rights-of-way for transmission line routing where possible and gaining as much separation from residences as possible. Many noted that the sooner the line was to leave Manitoba, the shorter it would be and there would be less affected residences and agricultural lands. The summaries provided to each municipal council and to participants during Round 2, following Round 1 can be found in Appendix B.

3.3.3 Round 2 feedback

Round 2 (beginning in April 2017) aimed to share information and collect feedback regarding the preferred route from Birtle South Station to the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border. The following was undertaken for Round 2 of the PEP.

Table 3-2: Round 2 feedback

Method	Number of participants/pieces
Postcards	1,059
Posters	12
Potentially affected landowner letters	39
Letters sent to meters within one mile of the preferred route	125
Number of Landowner Information Centres	3
Number of Landowner Information Centre participants	38
Number of completed landowner questionnaires	23
Number of stakeholder meetings	5*

**three meetings were held with multiple members from the Technical Advisory Committee and*

those responsible for pasture management

Concerns and feedback received during this round were focused on individual properties to understand use of landholdings. The landowner questionnaire served to document these discussions and provide the information to the environmental assessment team to review and consider this feedback in the environmental assessment work they were undertaking. Manitoba Hydro representatives addressed questions and concerns from participants that were focused on weed control, the use of the southern pasture, routing decisions, compensation, and liability. Round 2 also aimed to gather information on tower placement and construction timing to better understand and limit potential impacts to landowners. Key concerns are outlined in section 3.4 of this chapter. The summary report, material and feedback can be found in more detail in Appendix B.

3.3.4 Border crossing and preferred route determination

For the transmission line routing process, the feedback received through the PEP was shared and considered with the feedback received through the Indigenous engagement process. These two processes provided information regarding potential effects and mitigation measures, and provided input to route rankings from the community perspective. Feedback from both processes indicated that there were differing views on the use of Crown and private lands to route a transmission line. The community team preferred options that had proximity to a limited number of residences, used both Crown and private lands and used mile alignments where possible, traverse less areas of high potential for heritage sites and balanced overall concerns heard throughout the engagement processes. Options that met these criteria were more preferred from the community perspective than those that did not. More information on the route selection process can be found in chapter 6.0.

3.4 Key outcomes

Throughout the PEP, which began in the fall of 2016, Manitoba Hydro created opportunities to share Project information and sought to listen to feedback and understand concerns. Manitoba Hydro shared information with various individuals and organizations and established a variety of opportunities for participants to shape the engagement process to best suit their needs, and participate in meetings throughout the process.

These efforts helped Manitoba Hydro gain a better understanding of needs, concerns and priorities about environmental processes, and the PEP input was an important factor in determining a final preferred route that lessens potential effects on people and the environment, and important input to the environmental assessment process. Participants shared concerns during the engagement process about the location of the route and potential effects associated with the transmission line.

The concerns that were raised throughout the public engagement process and the responses provided to participants are detailed in Appendix D. Participants were concerned that the presence of tower structures would impact farming operations and the mobility of farm equipment and planes used for spraying and monitoring pastureland. A number of comments reflected that impacts to farming operations are a greater concern to farmers than the loss of farmable land. Farmers said they would prefer to see the transmission corridor routed along existing roads. Participants also expressed concern that the presence of tower structures in agricultural lands could potentially result in increased liability for farmers, believing that the size of the farming equipment and the experience of operators can result in farming equipment hitting and damaging the tower and/or equipment that farmers could be responsible to then pay for the damage. Some participants recommended that Manitoba Hydro place the towers further from the road right of way while others commented that the towers should be set right against the road ROW.

Another key recommendation from participants was to avoid homes. Participants questioned why the preferred route is not located through the Spy Hill-Ellice Community Pasture where there are no homes.

Many participants recommended protecting natural and wildlife areas. Natural areas in the region are used for a wide variety of recreational activities, such as quadding, cross-country skiing, hiking, sledding, and paintball, and are home to a variety of wildlife. It was noted that the valley that runs through the RM of Russell-Binscarth is home to wildlife such as moose, white-tailed deer, mule deer, bears, coyotes, and bald eagles. Participants from all three of the RMs commented that they would like the area to remain the same, and have concerns that a transmission corridor could affect their enjoyment of these natural areas. However, some participants felt that the transmission corridor would provide easier access to some natural areas that could be used for recreation. A number of the follow-up emails from stakeholders indicated concerns about the impact of the transmission line on ecologically sensitive sites, such as grasslands and areas with sensitive flora and fauna. Some of the follow-up stakeholder

emails also expressed concern about the preferred route being located in the Spy Hill-Ellice Community Pasture, as there is sensitive flora and fauna in the this area.

3.5 Ongoing engagement

3.5.1 Overview

Manitoba Hydro is committed to continue working with landowners and interested parties along the final preferred route as we progress through the regulatory, easement acquisition, construction and operational phases of the Project. The following mechanisms will be used to maintain contact:

- Landowner Project liaisons;
- Website;
- Email campaigns; and
- Telephone access.

3.5.2 Landowner Project liaison

Manitoba Hydro has assigned staff to liaise with affected landowners, to serve as the primary contact into the corporation as the Project progresses. The landowner liaison acts as a conduit to provide information and to collect information from potentially affected landowners. They share information during Project milestones such as opportunities to participate in the regulatory review, the easement acquisition process, and documenting specific landholding concerns that will be used by construction teams if the Project is approved.

3.5.3 Website

Manitoba Hydro will continue to maintain the Project webpage and will upload regulatory filings as part of the regulatory review process. Updates on current status of the Project, how to become involved in the regulatory review process and public materials will remain available on the Project website through construction and operation of the Project.

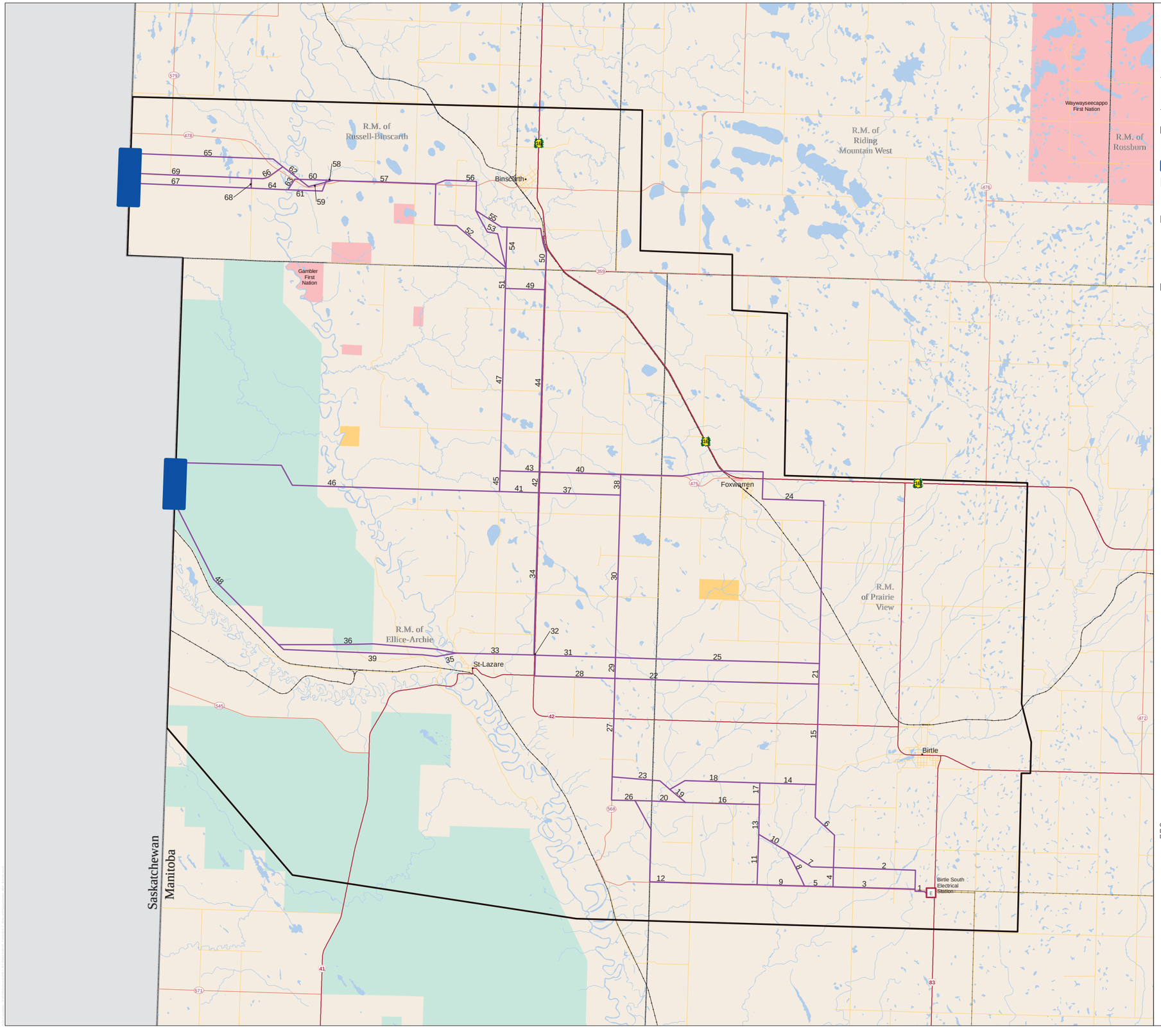
3.5.4 Email campaigns

Manitoba Hydro will continue building the list of email contacts and will inform those interested regarding upcoming milestones such as regulatory filings, windows for public

participation, hearings, regulatory decisions, opportunities to participate, and updates on construction and operation. The mailing list will be used throughout the regulatory and construction phases of the Project until operation of the transmission line. The Manitoba Hydro webpage will continue to offer participant email sign up.

3.5.5 Telephone line and email address

The toll-free information line and the dedicated Project email address will be maintained and continue to provide a mechanism to answer questions and address concerns throughout the regulatory, construction and operation phases of the Project.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Binscarth
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Manitoba Hydro
Birtle Transmission Project
Project Infrastructure
Alternative Route Segments
Border Connection Zone
Route Planning
Infrastructure
Birtle South Electrical Station
Transmission Lines
Landbase
Community
Provincial Trunk Highway
Provincial Road
Road (Other)
Rail
Rural Municipality
First Nation
Wildlife Management
Community Pastures
Waterbody
Watercourse
Coordinate System: UTM Zone 14N NAD83
Data Source: MBHydro, ProvMB, NRCAN
Date Created: Friday, November 04, 2016
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Round 1
Alternate Routes
Map 3-1

Available in accessible formats upon request