

May 29, 2009

MANITOBA HYDRO AND FOUR CREE NATIONS SIGN HISTORIC JOINT KEEYASK DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT

An historic signing ceremony took place in the community of Split Lake today with Members and representatives from the Keeyask Cree Nations (Tataskweyak Cree Nation, War Lake First Nation, Fox Lake Cree Nation, and York Factory First Nation) and Manitoba Hydro. Representatives from the provincial government were also present to witness the special ceremony.

The event marked the official signing of the Joint Keeyask Development Agreement (JKDA) which outlines the partnership arrangements for First Nations' participation in the development of the Keeyask Generating Station in northern Manitoba. Signing of the JKDA does not guarantee Keeyask will be built. The Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board has yet to approve the construction of the Keeyask project and both provincial and federal regulatory licences and approvals are still required. If the project proceeds, it will have immediate and long term benefits for Manitoba Hydro and the First Nations involved.

Participating in the signing were Tataskweyak Chief Duke Beardy, War Lake Chief Betsy Kennedy, York Factory Chief Johnny Saunders, Fox Lake Chief George Neepin, Hydro Minister Greg Selinger, Hydro Chairman Vic Schroeder, and Hydro President & CEO Bob Brennan.

Minister Greg Selinger said, "This historic agreement represents a special milestone for the Keeyask Cree Nations, the province of Manitoba, and Manitoba Hydro and it's extremely gratifying to see all parties involved take the next step towards the Keeyask Generating Station project. I'm delighted to be here today in Split Lake where the first agreement in 2000 between the Tataskweyak Cree Nation and Manitoba Hydro established the model for the partnership we know today."

The JKDA establishes a partnership comprised of Manitoba Hydro and the four Cree Nations that will manage the construction and operation of the Keeyask project and all associated business activities. Manitoba Hydro will provide administrative and management services for Keeyask and will own at least 75 per cent of the equity of the partnership. The Keeyask Cree Nations collectively have the right to own up to 25 per cent of the partnership.

Hydro President and CEO Bob Brennan added, "I'm extremely pleased that all four Keeyask Cree Nations have ratified this agreement and look forward to the project's next steps. An enormous amount of hard work from Manitoba Hydro staff and representatives of the Keeyask Cree Nations is represented in this agreement and it's extremely gratifying to see it come to a successful conclusion."

Individual Adverse Effects Agreements with the four Nations have also been signed. These agreements outline procedures for the avoidance of adverse effects from the generating station and the establishment of programs to offset any unavoidable effects. Provision is made for programs to promote culture and language, ensure ongoing monitoring of environmental effects, increase Members' access to and use of the resource area, and provide ongoing training and jobs for community members.

Tataskweyak Chief Duke Beardy said, "Keeyask provides an opportunity for us to join the mainstream Manitoba economy to build a future of hope that will sustain and provide for all citizens of Tataskweyak Cree Nation."

War Lake Chief Betsy Kennedy added, "We are very optimistic that the JKDA will provide significant benefits now and for future generations of War Lake Members. It paves the way for economic development through business, employment and income opportunities—leading, we trust, to self-sufficiency."

The site for the Keeyask Generating Station is on the Nelson River, approximately 60 km downstream from Split Lake and 175 km northeast of Thompson. The station would have a nominal capacity of 695 megawatts and an in-service date as early as 2017.

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