

Anna Kessler  
Team Lead, Prairie and Northern Region  
Impact Assessment Agency of Canada / Government of Canada  
[anna.kessler@canada.ca](mailto:anna.kessler@canada.ca) / Tel: 587-785-8224 / Canada Place, Suite 1145-9700 Jasper Avenue,  
Edmonton Alberta, T5J 4C3

and

Matthew Dairon  
Project Manager, Prairie and Northern Region  
Impact Assessment Agency of Canada / Government of Canada  
[matthew.dairon@canada.ca](mailto:matthew.dairon@canada.ca) / Tel: 587-710-0133 / Canada Place, Suite 1145-9700 Jasper  
Avenue, Edmonton Alberta, T5J 4C3

Friday, September 20, 2019

Subject: Comments on draft Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin Outlet Channels EIS from  
Manitoba Infrastructure as part of initial conformity –

The engagement by Manitoba Infrastructure with Poplar River First Nation has consisted of three letters and one phone call in the last three years. This is far from ideal and we do not see how this fulfills the EIS guidelines.

Our First Nation has shoreline within the assessment areas for this project. We also have designated waters in Lake Winnipeg to protect sacred islands. Our territory is protected from development by Manitoba government regulation, and we are leader since the early 2000's in the World Heritage Site recently listed by the United Nations which includes our lands, and the lands of our neighbours on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

The draft EIS acknowledges the fact that Poplar River First Nation has a legally regulated land use plan but does not seem to reference the sacred islands just off the shoreline that are included in the lands plan. The draft EIS leaves out our official lands plan, used as the basis for provincial zoning and protection of our lands. The EIS in fact says that there are no such lands plans! The proponent admits that they have very few TRLU studies from affected First Nations, and yet it uses old information not relevant to this CEAA Project EA in our name.

We seem to be missing the technical studies to support much of what the proponent has written. We need to see the Manitoba Hydro analysis of water changes from the proposed project. Page 10.112) The appendices are also no complete at this time.

The species of fish in Lake Winnipeg are already changing, this proposed project in operation could increase those changes. What are the risks and effects? Clearly more work needs to be done, including engagement with our Nation.

We are concerned that the socio-economic analysis and cumulative impacts assessment in the proponents EIS do not clearly state the magnitude of changes impacting Lake Winnipeg. These changes are a very large risk to the Indigenous commercial fishery on Lake Winnipeg, and we are concerned that the Channels project will speed up these changes especially when it is used for a potential flood greater than the 2011 flood.

We also do not think that the analysis of impacts of flood waters travelling into Lake Winnipeg to the proposed channels properly assesses the risk of contaminants, pollutants and sediment load that will occur when the Channel is used. See section 9.5. Waters flowing from Saskatchewan, through lakes, rivers, and other flood prevention structures could bring much more pollution, nitrates, phosphorus and invasive species to our Lake and our fishery.

We are not clear if the proponent has clearly identified interactions between the new Fisheries Act and the EIS Guidelines. Will this change how the EIS is written and the analysis? It is not clear which federal laws and regulations are necessary for this EA and potential licensing of the Channels. We think that both provincial and federal laws, regulations and policies should be identified in the EIS but this has not happened.

We are not clear if the effects from the 2011 flood on Lake Winnipeg have been extensively studied or included in the cumulative assessment for the lake. We are also not clear if the proponent understand that Lake Winnipeg is a reservoir, that is it is a water system with infrastructure and channels built for hydro generation. The lake as reservoir affects our rights, our ability to exercise our rights, and both our economic fishery and our subsistence fishery. Effects from the 2011 flood in relation to the regulation of Lake Winnipeg are still being felt in the north basin of the Lake. The proponent needs to include these and study scenarios for when the next major flood event will happen – including a scenario of that event being greater than 2011.

Have outside experts been engaged to measure the plan to stop invasive species into Lake St. Martin and Lake Winnipeg? Our researchers are concerned about the aquatic species, invasive species, fish and fish habitat sections of the draft EIS.

We hope that the proponent understands that they did not engage our community, have not heard our thoughts, and cannot claim that their second hand or dated information is relevant to this federal review. We assume that MI will be assisting with our studies so we can fully assist your review. We consider your Guidelines to be important and appreciate the Indigenous requirements for assessment of the Channels project.

We are sending this letter with a chart identifying sections of the draft EIS, issues identified and comments in relation to the Guidelines issued by your agency. Our researchers have found that

the EIS Guidelines issued by your agency for the Channels project are not fulfilled. We will be participating in the process to make sure that the EIS is corrected.

This letter is sent on behalf of Poplar River First Nation, Treaty 5 Signatory.

Regards,

Jared Whelan, B.Sc. Env  
Project Manager for Poplar River First Nation

CC: Chief Vera Mitchell  
CC: Councillor Eddie Hudson  
CC: Lands Coordinator Clint Bittern