

Release

March 12, 2004

For Immediate Release

Manitoba Floodway Expansion Authority Announces Next Round of Public Consultation Process

Winnipeg, Manitoba – Manitoba Floodway Expansion Authority (MFEA) CEO, Ernie Gilroy, today announced plans for the next stage of extensive and inclusive public consultations associated with the proposed Red River Floodway Expansion Project.

Mr. Gilroy said, “The expansion of the Red River Floodway will dramatically improve the quality of life for Manitobans. It will make residents more secure, protect the environment, create jobs & economic development opportunities and establish a model for public consultation and community involvement.”

MFEA will conduct an extensive round of public consultation in April and May. It will focus on a number of key elements including: compensation, water levels, recreation & economic opportunities, mitigation, floodway operating rules and summer operation. Open houses are being planned for a number of communities. Meeting dates and details on discussion items will be announced in the coming weeks.

MFEA will report outcomes of the next stage of public consultation to the Manitoba Government and an ongoing independent environmental assessment process. The report will be made public at the conclusion of the MFEA consultation period and highlight next steps.

The consultations announced today compliment other elements of the public review process associated with the expansion of the Red River Floodway, including;

- An independent environmental review process to develop an environmental impact statement for the project. More information is available at www.floodwayeia.com.
- Manitoba, through its legislative review process, will receive input this spring regarding proposed flood compensation legislation.

- Canada and Manitoba have agreed to a cooperative review process in response to MFEA's application for an environmental license. This will ensure the expansion of the Red River Floodway meets the highest of both Manitoba's and Canada's standards for environmental and natural resource management.

Manitoba has asked the Clean Environment Commission to hold public hearings to consult the public further once the environmental impact statement is complete.

Mr. Gilroy said, "In addition to these important elements, MFEA will initiate a fourth element of public engagement. It will be inclusive, innovative and informative. We want to invite Manitobans to have their say on the project and help shape the future of their communities for generations to come."

He also noted MFEA is considering additional measures to compliment their public engagement process, including: youth outreach, 1-800 access for rural residents, interactive web-site, public opinion research, questionnaires and development of an interactive virtual reality floodway.

Mr. Gilroy concluded, "We are committed to providing increased flood protection to as many Manitobans as possible. We will provide excellence in project management and go far beyond the environmental protection standards used to construct the original floodway. We look forward to hearing from Manitoba residents in the months ahead."

Over the last year, the Government of Canada and Province of Manitoba have announced \$240 million to begin work on the \$660 million floodway expansion – more than one-third the total cost. Canada has recognized the project as a national priority.

Following 1997's "Flood of the Century", Canada and Manitoba invested \$130 million in flood protection measures - \$110 million for rural residents in the Red River Valley.

- 30 -

Backgrounder: Regulatory Approval - Public Consultation Process

Contact: Ernie Gilroy, CEO
Manitoba Floodway Authority
(204) 945-4900

Red River Floodway Expansion Project **Regulatory Approval - Public Consultation Process**

Before construction can proceed on the floodway expansion, the project requires;

- preparation of an independent Environmental Impact Assessment
- a license under the provincial *Environmental Act*, and
- federal environmental authorization

Under the provisions of the *Canada-Manitoba Agreement on Environmental Assessment Cooperation*, Manitoba and Canada have agreed that both governments will participate in a cooperative review of the proposed project, which will be led by Manitoba and address both provincial and federal regulatory requirements.

Public involvement is a critical element of the environmental assessment process for the proposed floodway expansion. Over the next year, there will be four complimentary elements of the public involvement process for the project, including:

1. Independent Environmental Impact Assessment (current) – This separate and independent process is intended to provide early and ongoing opportunities for citizens to receive information on, and provide their views about potential project effects, measures to mitigate those effects and various other requirements associated with the project's environmental impact.

The first of three rounds in this process started in January and will be complete by mid-March. This round features meetings with 12 local municipal governments, four multi-stakeholder workshops and public meetings in Selkirk, Dugald, Ste. Agathe and Winnipeg. For more information, contact www.floodwayeia.com.

2. Manitoba Legislature (current) – The Province of Manitoba has just introduced draft legislation regarding flood compensation. Manitobans will have an opportunity to provide comment on these measures through the normal legislative process.
3. Manitoba Floodway Expansion Authority (just announced) – The Manitoba Floodway Expansion Authority (MFEA) has been established to oversee the planning and management of the project. MFEA also has a mandate to consult Manitobans regarding other elements of the expansion, including: recreation & economic opportunities, floodway operating rules, compensation, mitigation, summer operation and water levels. MFEA will report outcomes to Manitoba and the Independent Environmental Impact Assessment.
4. Clean Environment Commission (upcoming) - Once the environmental impact assessment is completed, reviewed and accepted by Manitoba, the Clean Environment Commission will be in a position to conduct additional public hearings related to the project.