



Release

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ABORIGINAL SET-ASIDE INITIATIVE ESTABLISHED FOR THE RED RIVER FLOODWAY EXPANSION PROJECT

First Tenders Advertised For Construction of Section of the West Dike

Winnipeg, MB – In an effort to help address a future potential skilled labour shortage and generate economic opportunities for the Aboriginal community, the Manitoba Floodway Authority (MFA) today advertised three tenders for construction on one section of the West Dike component of the Red River Floodway Expansion Project as part of an Aboriginal Set-Aside Initiative.

“The set-aside is designed to provide valuable jobs and construction experience for Aboriginal contractors and construction workers,” said Steve Ashton, Minister of Water Stewardship. “As we have seen from past endeavours, the most effective way of meeting future labour challenges is by providing opportunities to build skills and experience today. This initiative will not only benefit the Aboriginal community, but also the construction industry and the provincial economy in the years ahead.”

“The First Nations community is heavily involved in the construction industry and this initiative provides an important opportunity to work on a large scale public infrastructure project,” said Ron Evans, Grand Chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs. “By gaining valuable experience on this job, First Nation contractors and workers will be able to work on other major construction projects in the future. We welcome this initiative and look forward to working with the MFA as the initiative moves forward.”

“By packaging the construction tenders in a variety of sizes, many smaller Métis contractors will be able to bid on the work,” said David Chartrand, President of the Manitoba Metis Federation. “This will mean jobs and economic opportunities for our community. This will benefit the Manitoba Métis Community for years to come.”

To qualify as an Aboriginal firm to bid for work on the Aboriginal set-aside, a contractor must be at least:

- 51% Aboriginal-owned; and
- 1/3 of its employees must be Aboriginal persons

The West Dike, which is currently approximately 45 km (28 miles) in length and located southwest of Winnipeg, will be extended between 10 km (6 miles) and 15 km (9 miles) and raised in height in varying amounts to 1.5 metres (6 feet) to increase the flood protection safety factor. These improvements will provide increased protection against wind and wave action during major flood events.

Today, the MFA advertised three tenders for work on one six mile section of the West Dike that will be undertaken in the 2006 construction season:

- Contract W1 - dike construction and granular road surfacing
- Contract W2 - dike construction and granular road surfacing
- Contract W3 - dike construction and granular road surfacing

The work will consist of the dike construction, ditch grading, culvert installation, traffic control, temporary detours, traffic signage, silt fencing and other temporary erosion control measures, granular road surfacing, and revegetation. In the upcoming week, MFA will be advertising an additional tender for the supply and installation of rock rip rap for the six mile section. Pending the outcome of all of the work on the first section, additional sections may be tendered as part of the Aboriginal Set-Aside Initiative in subsequent years.

“Increasing the pool of contractors and workers is critical to the long-term success of projects within the construction industry,” said Ernie Gilroy, CEO of the MFA. “This initiative will encourage Aboriginal contractors to become involved in the floodway project and will assist in increasing workers available for the floodway and other future construction projects.

Over the past year, the MFA has been working with the Aboriginal community to develop the Aboriginal Set-Aside Initiative. This process has included ongoing dialogue with Aboriginal contractors, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the Manitoba Métis Federation, the Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce, First Nation communities and Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal contractors interested to learn more about the Aboriginal Set-Aside are encouraged to attend any of the following information sessions:

- Winnipeg, May 23, Canad Inns, Polo Park, (6:30 pm to 8:30 pm)
- Thompson, May 24, Burntwood Inn (6:30 pm – 8:30 pm)
- The Pas, May 25, Kikiwak Inn (6:30 pm – 8:30 pm)

In addition, a Bidders’ Conference on the tenders will be held on June 6, 2006, 9:00 am to noon at Canad Inns, Polo Park, to discuss the details of the W1, W2 and W3 tenders. For more information on the tenders, please visit the MERX electronic tendering service (www.merx.ca).

The Aboriginal Set-Aside Initiative is a key component of the MFA’s Employment Equity Strategy. The strategy is designed to encourage the participation of designated employment equity groups (Aboriginal people, women, persons with disabilities, and members of visible minorities) on the floodway project. Other components of the strategy include a 20% employment equity initiative on all floodway contracts and a floodway training initiative.

The Red River Floodway Expansion Project will divert more water around Winnipeg during major floods by more than doubling the capacity of the floodway channel. By improving flood protection to 1 in 700 year level of protection, floodway expansion will protect more than 450,000 Manitobans, over 140,000 homes, over 8,000 businesses and prevent more than \$12 billion in damages to the provincial economy. To date, the Government of Canada and the Province of Manitoba have contributed \$240 million toward the Red River Floodway Expansion Project.

For more information on the Red River Floodway Expansion Project, please visit www.floodwayauthority.mb.ca or contact the MFA at 945-4900 or toll free at 1-866-356-6355.

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