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IMPROVEMENTS TO FLOODWAY PROJECT HIGHLIGHTED AT CLEAN ENVIRONMENT COMMISSION (CEC) PUBLIC HEARINGS

Expansion Project to Protect the Environment: Gilroy

Winnipeg, Manitoba – Speaking at the opening day of the Clean Environment Commission (CEC) public hearings on the Red River Floodway expansion project, Ernie Gilroy, CEO of the Manitoba Floodway Authority (MFA), took the opportunity to highlight the benefits of the project and the significant improvements that have been made to the project over the past year as a result of MFA's extensive public consultation program.

“Floodway expansion will more than double the existing capacity of the Floodway and will protect 450,000 Manitobans when a 1-in-700 year flood hits,” said Gilroy. “This project represents an investment in our future and will protect the long-term well being of our children, our grandchildren and future generations.”

The Red River Floodway expansion project involves a major expansion of the existing floodway protection system including the floodway channel, bridges, the inlet and outlet control works, utilities and services and the West Dike. The project will increase the capacity of the floodway from 60,000 cubic feet per second (CFS) to 140,000 (CFS) to be diverted around Winnipeg during major floods. This will greatly improve protection for Winnipeg from catastrophic floods materially greater than the 1997 flood (approximate 1 in 100 year return period), and provide Winnipeg reliable security against floods of up to the 1 in 700 year return period.

In his remarks, Gilroy outlined the extensive public consultation process that has been undertaken by MFA since January, 2004. Specifically, he noted that the consultation consisted of four rounds of public consultation, 275 hours of stakeholder meetings, 40,000 hits on the MFA website, the distribution of 60,000 newsletters and more than 40 presentations to municipalities and other organizations. Gilroy noted that the project's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was not filed until after three rounds of public consultation were completed in order to provide an opportunity for the public to provide meaningful input on the project.

“Public input has helped to shape and improve the floodway project,” said Gilroy. “We have listened to the public and made improvements to protect groundwater, reduce erosion, improve transportation, limit land acquisition and improve drainage. These and other improvements have resulted in a project that is environmentally sound, sensitive to local concerns, and a model for sustainable development.”



As a result of the improvements incorporated into the project, the project's Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) concludes that *the Project, after the implementation of mitigation measures outlined in the EIS, is expected to create no significant adverse effects on the biophysical or related socio-economic environments.*

After the flood of 1997, the International Joint Commission (IJC) concluded that Winnipeg is at risk of major floods larger in magnitude than the 1997 event, and that the potential damages in the City of Winnipeg due to such floods would be greater than \$10 billion for a 1 in 700 year flood. Gilroy noted that, in addition to the economic impact, a flood greater than 1997 would also likely result in significant social and environmental damages. According to the EIS, it is estimated that in the event of a 1-in-700 year flood, 450,000 residents would be at risk of flooding without an expanded floodway.

In the aftermath of the 1997 "flood of the century", the Governments of Canada and Manitoba invested \$130 million in flood protection measures including \$110 million for rural Manitoba communities. Canada and Manitoba have confirmed their commitment to complete the expanded floodway at an estimated cost of \$665 million. Canada has recognized the floodway expansion as a national infrastructure priority.

Gilroy noted that the MFA has allocated \$300,000 in participant assistance funding to support the seven organizations that are participating in the public hearings

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