

March 30, 2010

**PROVINCE ANNOUNCES MAJOR INVESTMENT IN ALL-SEASON ROAD
TO CONNECT EAST SIDE COMMUNITIES**

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**\$72.5 Million in Budget 2010
Brings Manitoba's Total Investment to \$93 Million: Selinger**

Manitoba is one step closer to replacing winter roads with permanent all-season connections, thanks to a \$72.5-million investment announced today by Premier Greg Selinger and Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Minister Eric Robinson, minister responsible for the East Side Road Authority (ESRA).

"Climate change is contributing to a shorter winter road season on average, with southern sections of our winter road network particularly vulnerable as we witnessed this year," said Selinger. "Today, we are moving forward on a permanent solution with this significant investment in a project that will create employment, training and economic development opportunities for local people while bringing down the cost of living and providing better access to essential services."

The new investment will go toward the ongoing work of the Manitoba Floodway and East Side Road Authority (MFESRA), whose mandate was expanded in 2009 from managing the expansion of the Red River Floodway to include the construction and maintenance of an all-season road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg as part of the East Side Transportation Initiative.

The East Side Transportation Initiative includes construction of a 160-kilometre, all-season road from PR 304 near Manigotagan to Bloodvein First Nation and through to Berens River First Nation. The initiative also includes a study to examine potential transportation infrastructure improvements for the remainder of the region, expected to be complete by the end of 2010.

"In a little over one year, a significant amount of work has been undertaken on the all-season road project," said Ernie Gilroy, CEO of the MFESRA. "This includes filing an environmental impact assessment for the PR 304 to Berens River all-season road project, proceeding with the large area transportation network study and signing community benefits agreements with east-side communities. Today's announcement will help to ensure that, pending environmental approval, we are in a position to begin construction later this year."

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In addition to securing the necessary environmental approvals, much of the ESRA's work has focused on establishing community benefits agreements (CBAs) with east side communities to ensure that jobs, training, and economic benefits are maximized for local residents. To date, ESRA has signed CBAs with Berens River, Bloodvein, Red Sucker Lake, St. Theresa Point and Wasagamack First Nations. Discussions are ongoing with other communities, said Gilroy.

"The people of the east side are already benefiting from what will be one of the largest infrastructure projects in Manitoba's history," said Robinson. "An all-weather road represents one of our best single opportunities to improve life on the east side by reducing transportation costs for food, goods and people, improving access to vital services such as health care, and fostering greater economic development and tourism opportunities for local people."

Building permanent road connections to east-side communities will also fulfil a number of key recommendations of the 2004 report *Promises to Keep* produced as part of the Wabanong Nakaygum Okimawin east side planning initiative, said Robinson. The report contains a number of community recommendations that were put forward to the government as a result of east side community meetings held in 2004. The recommendations range from the protection of traditional lands to improved transportation, sustainable economic development, and increased employment and training opportunities.

Provincial environmental approvals are expected to be complete by the end of 2010. Discussions with the Government of Canada are also underway regarding federal environmental licensing and the prospect of federal funding for the project, said Robinson.

EAST SIDE TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE

The Government of Manitoba established the East Side Transportation Initiative to improve transportation for the 36,000 residents who live in the remote and isolated communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. An all-season road will help to improve the quality of life and standard of living, while providing employment and economic development opportunities for people living on the east side. Some of the benefits include:

- greater reliability of the transportation network;
- reduced transportation costs for goods and services;
- enhanced access to emergency, health and social services;
- improved linkages between isolated and remote communities;
- greater mobility and transportation options for local residents;
- construction employment and economic opportunities for local people; and
- enhanced opportunities for sustainable economic development including recreation, tourism and resource development;

The East Side Transportation Initiative consists of two priority areas:

1. The PR 304 to Berens River all-season road – Construction of a 160-kilometre, all-season gravel road from PR 304 to Berens River First Nation. Upgrading and maintenance work is currently underway on the existing Rice River Road and, pending environmental approval, construction will start in the fall of 2010.
2. Large Area Transportation Network Study – The East Side Large Area Transportation Network Study is designed to examine transportation improvements for the remainder of the east side region. The study is currently underway and is expected to be completed and recommend an all-season road route alignment by the end of 2010.

At the same time, the ESRA is also working to ensure that local east side communities are prepared and develop the capacity to participate in the construction of the all-season road. As part of this effort, ESRA has signed community benefits agreements (CBAs) with five First Nation communities. The CBAs are designed to generate jobs, training and economic development opportunities for local communities related to pre-construction activities such as gravel crushing, right-of-way clearing and pilot projects for access route exploratory clearing. Discussions are ongoing with other First Nations for future CBAs.

To date, 32 local east-side residents have been offered basic and essential construction skills and skilled-labourer training. As the project proceeds, additional training opportunities including basic and essential construction skills, skilled labourer and heavy equipment operator training related to gravel crushing, right-of-way clearing and road construction will be undertaken.

TIMELINE

- November 2008 – The throne speech of the Government of Manitoba announces the Manitoba Floodway Authority (MFA) will be given the mandate for the construction of an all-weather road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.
- Jan. 30, 2009 – The East Side Road Authority files an application to begin the process of environmental licensing for the construction of the all-season road from PR 304 to Berens River First Nation.
- March 2009 – Budget 2009 reaffirms the government's commitment and invests \$27 million in the all-season road project. The government also announces the "Manitoba Floodway Authority will partner with the East Side communities to build an all-purpose road...that will ensure local residents have the opportunity to share in the project's economic benefits."
- April 30, 2009 – The Government of Manitoba introduces Bill 31, the Manitoba Floodway Authority Amendment Act, to officially expand the mandate of the Manitoba Floodway Authority to assume responsibility for the construction and maintenance of an all-season road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.
- Aug. 19, 2009 – ESRA signs an \$11.25-million community benefits agreement with Berens River First Nation to provide jobs, training and economic opportunities related to pre-construction work for the all-season road.
- September 2009 – ESRA offers an introduction to construction course (basic and essential construction skills) to 15 residents of Berens River First Nation.
- Oct. 8, 2009 – The Government of Manitoba gives royal assent to Bill 31, the Manitoba Floodway Authority Amendment Act
- Nov. 5, 2009 – ESRA files an Environmental Impact Assessment for the all-season road from PR 304 to Berens River First Nation.
- November 2009 – ESRA offers a skilled labourer training course to five residents from Berens River First Nation.
- November/December 2009 – ESRA offers an introduction to construction course (basic and essential construction skills) to 12 residents of Berens River First Nation.
- Dec. 1, 2009 – Bill 31 is officially proclaimed establishing the Manitoba Floodway and East Side Road Authority.
- Dec. 4, 2009 – ESRA signs a \$2.25-million community benefits agreement with Wasagamack First Nation to provide jobs, training and economic opportunities related to pre-construction work for the all-season road.
- Jan. 4, 2010 – ESRA signs a \$7.75-million community benefits agreement with Bloodvein First Nation to provide jobs, training and economic opportunities related to pre-construction work for the all-season road.

- March 15, 2010 – ESRA signs a \$2.25-million community benefits agreement with Red Sucker Lake First Nation to provide jobs, training and economic opportunities related to pre-construction work for the all-season road.
- March 16, 2010 – ESRA signs a \$2.25-million community benefits agreement with St. Theresa Point First Nation to provide jobs, training and economic opportunities related to pre-construction work for the all-season road.
- March 30, 2010 – Province of Manitoba announces an investment of \$72.5 million for an all-season road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.