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# Release

For Immediate Release  
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## **\$2.25 MILLION COMMUNITY BENEFITS AGREEMENT SIGNED WITH POPLAR RIVER FIRST NATION**

### **Pilot Project to Assist in Determining Future All-Season Road Route**

Today, the East Side Road Authority (ESRA) and Poplar River First Nation announced the signing of a \$2.25 million Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) that will provide jobs, training and economic opportunities for local residents in preparation for construction of an all-season road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

"We congratulate Chief and Council and the community of Poplar River for moving forward with this important agreement," said Eric Robinson, Minister responsible for the East Side Road Authority. "Over the years, the community of Poplar River has demonstrated significant leadership in land-use planning and other community initiatives. With this agreement the community has again taken leadership by embracing the opportunities that the all-season road will provide for their residents."

"Our community welcomes the all-season road project," said Russell Lambert, Chief of Poplar River First Nation. "The project has been a long time in coming and by signing the Community Benefits Agreement, we can ensure that community members participate in the project and benefit from jobs and training. We look forward to working with the Government of Manitoba and the East Side Road Authority on this important project."

"With the signing of this agreement, Poplar River First Nation will be undertaking pre-construction work that will allow us to move forward with the construction of the all-season road," said Ernie Gilroy, CEO of the ESRA. "We look forward to working with the Chief and Council and the community to generate jobs, training and economic development opportunities related to the all-season road construction."

Under the agreement, Poplar River First Nation will undertake exploratory clearing and clearing of access roads to assist in determining the viability and potential alignment for a future all-season road. The agreement also allows the First Nation to utilize all usable harvested material for community purposes. In addition, the agreement also establishes a construction training program that will provide training opportunities for basic and essential construction skills and skilled labourer or heavy equipment operator training related to gravel crushing, right-of-way clearing and road construction for up to thirty training positions.

Under the terms of the agreement, Poplar River First Nation will be required to establish a separate corporate entity to undertake the pilot project and related activities. ESRA will perform project and contract administration services for Poplar River First Nation in order to assist the First Nation in project management, mentoring and ensuring appropriate oversight. The total value of the three-year agreement, including the training provided by ESRA, is estimated to a maximum of \$2,250,000.

To date, ESRA has announced the signing of Community Benefits Agreements with Berens River, Bloodvein, Hollow Water, Wasagamack, Red Sucker Lake, and St. Theresa Point First Nations. Discussions are ongoing with other east side communities on future agreements.

As part of the East Side Transportation Initiative, the East Side Road Authority has filed an Environmental Impact Assessment for the construction of a 160 kilometre all-season road from PR 304 to Berens River First Nation. Pending environmental approval from federal and provincial regulators, construction is scheduled to begin later this year.

At the same time, ESRA is also undertaking a Large Area Transportation Network Study (LATNS) to examine potential route options for an all-season road in the northern portion of the east side region. In June, Round Two Community Meetings were held throughout the region to receive further community input on various potential route options under consideration. Feedback received from the communities will be considered and included in the final LATNS study, which is expected to be completed with a recommendation for an all-season road route by the end of 2010.

For more information on the East Side Transportation Initiative, please visit the [www.eastsideroadauthority.mb.ca](http://www.eastsideroadauthority.mb.ca) or contact (204) 945-4900 or toll-free 1-866-356-6355.

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