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The East Side Transportation Initiative Moves Forward

In the November, 2008 Throne Speech, the Government of Manitoba announced its intention to move forward with the construction of an all-season road on the East Side of Lake Winnipeg.

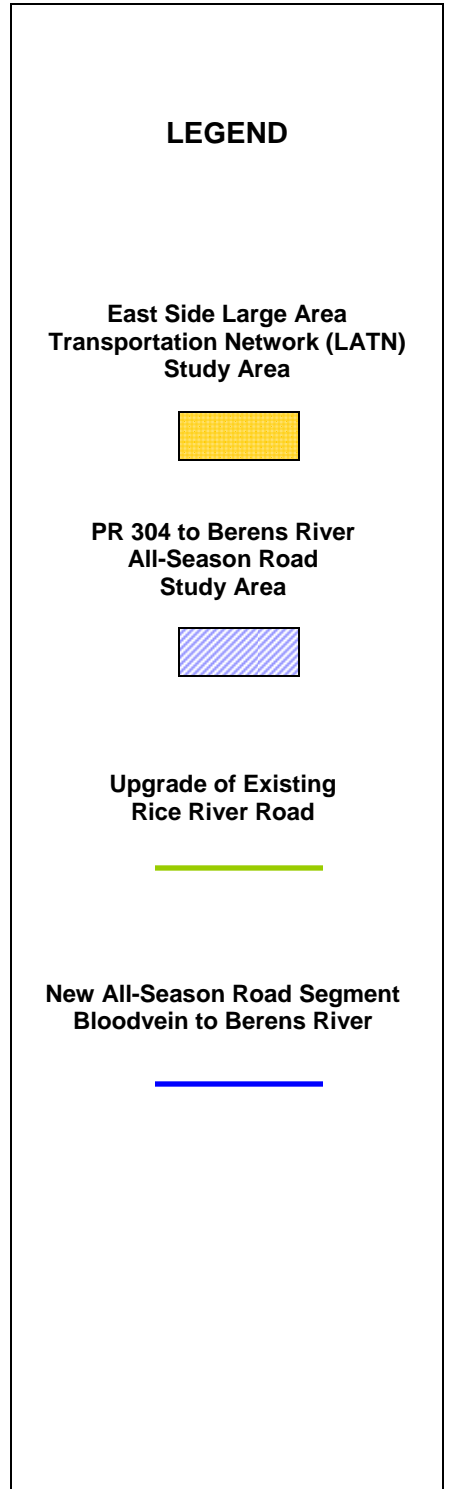
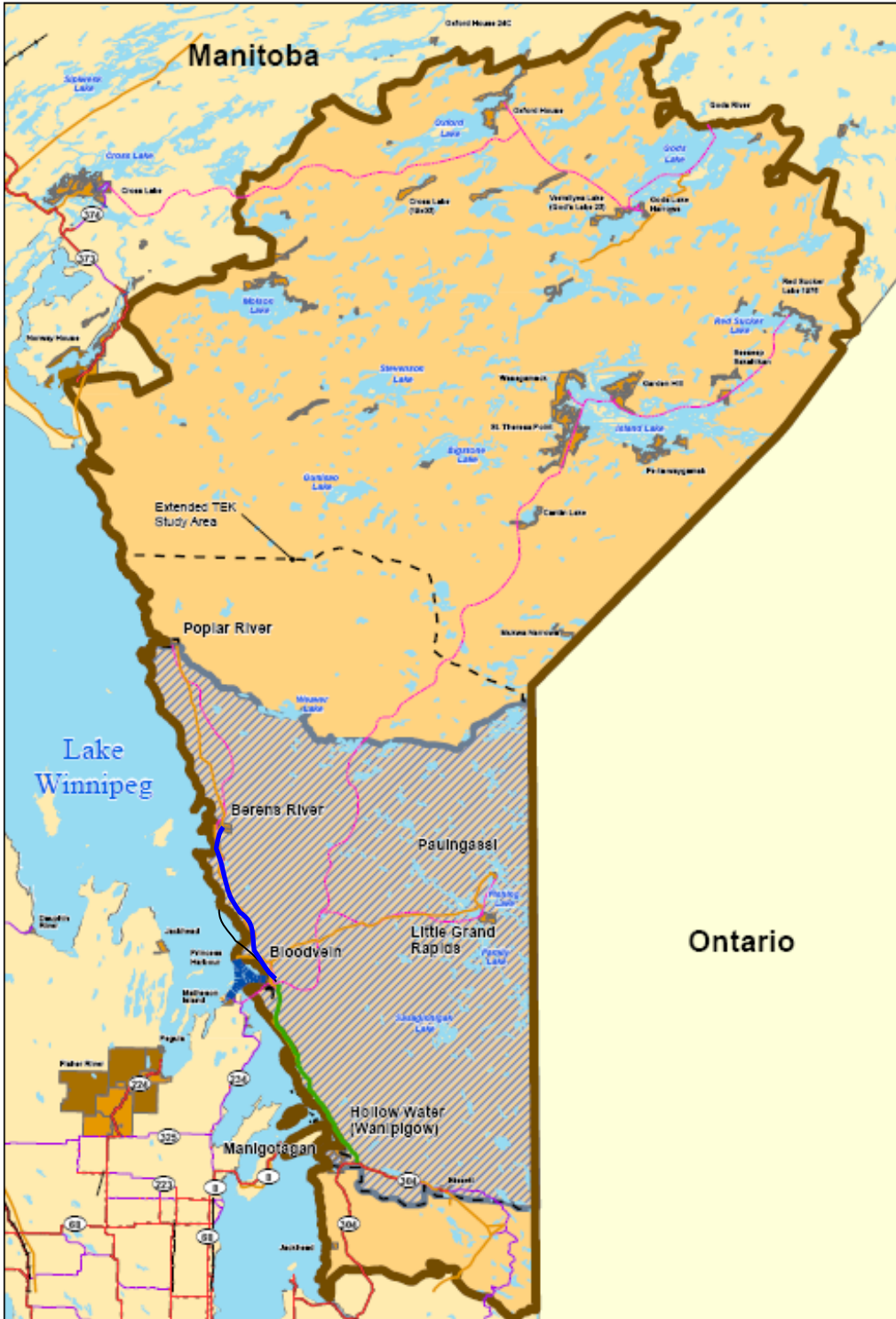
Since that time, *Bill 31 – The Manitoba Floodway Authority Amendment Act* was introduced in the Manitoba Legislature to officially expand the mandate of the Manitoba Floodway Authority and establish the East Side Road Authority Inc.(ESRA) to oversee construction of the all season road.

ESRA is responsible for managing the East Side Transportation Initiative (ESTI), a government initiative designed to provide improved, safe and more reliable transportation service between the communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg and the rest of the province.

This newsletter builds upon the previous newsletter and provides updates on:

- 1) The overall initiative;
- 2) The Environmental Impact Assessment; and
- 3) The 2nd Round of the Community Engagement Process

**EAST SIDE TRANSPORTATION STUDY AREA AND
PR 304 BERENS RIVER ALL-SEASON ROAD STUDY AREA**



WHAT IS THE EAST SIDE TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE?

The Government of Manitoba established the East Side Transportation Initiative (ESTI) to improve transportation for the remote and isolated communities located on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. ESTI consists of two distinctly separate but interrelated components which are proceeding at the same time:

1) The East Side Large Area Transportation Network (LATN) Study (The Study) is reviewing potential transportation options for the region on the east side of Lake Winnipeg within the Wabanong Nakagum Okimawin (WNO) planning area;

2) Construction of an all-season road from Provincial Road 304 to Berens River First Nation (The Project) including development of an environmental impact assessment and engineering design work.

THE LARGE AREA TRANSPORTATION NETWORK STUDY

The Study

The Government of Manitoba is committed to examining transportation improvements in the east side region through the completion of a Large Area Transportation Network Study.

Improvements, identified through the study, will serve the transportation needs of local communities, provide opportunities for social and economic development, as well as environmentally sensitive and respectful of First Nations traditional activities, culture and land values.

Study Area

The geographic location of the study area extends from Bloodvein First Nation north to Oxford House and east to the Ontario Border.

The Scope

Improvements to the existing transportation system will include:

- Upgrade the winter roads by moving them onto firmer ground and providing permanent bridges at major water crossings;
- Provision of improved or new summer ferry service;
- Use of all-season vehicles such as hovercraft;
- Provision of all-season roads.

The long-term transportation goal is to connect all existing communities by an all-season road to Manitoba's existing all-season road system. Community input has been received in order to minimize environmental impacts, while at the same time providing improved transportation service at minimum public cost for construction, operation and maintenance.

The Large Area Transportation Network Study consists of two parallel and interactive processes to study options to connect the east side communities to the rest of the all-season transportation network:

1) A Technical Process: This is the identification of feasible all-season route alternatives based on route selection criteria. The technical process has considered the following:

- The suitability of the terrain, soils and surface geological deposits to accommodate the road and to provide sources of granular materials to build the road;
- Protection of the natural environment with its important animal, plants and fisheries resources;
- Protection of historical sites, artefacts, archaeological resources, local culture and traditional land uses;

- Enhancement of opportunities for social and economic improvements by providing more reliable access to communities, potential development sites and renewable natural resources;
- Provision of the most appropriate routes to enhance travel and trade opportunities between the East Side Planning Area and the rest of Manitoba;
- Protection of traditional land and resource uses.

2) **Community Input Process:** This involves the dialogue with people residing in the study area in order to gain their insight into preferences and potential impacts associated with the development of an all-season transportation network. The community input process has included:

- **Round One Community Meetings** – (March to July 2009) – These were held to inform local residents about the study and to receive public input;
- **Traditional Knowledge Studies** – (May to August 2009) – A TK study was conducted to gather input from local residents on the environmental, social-economic and cultural implications of project development;
- **Round Two Community Meetings** – (December 2009) – These meetings will be held to present detailed findings of the preferred route alignments based on input received from the first round of meetings and TK studies.

More detail on the Community Engagement Process is described on Page 9.

Timing

The Large Area Transportation Network Study will be conducted over the next two years and is anticipated to be completed in the fall 2010, at which time a preferred alignment will be recommended.

ALL-SEASON ROAD FROM PR 304 TO BERENS RIVER

THE PROJECT - ALL-SEASON ROAD FROM PROVINCIAL ROAD 304 TO BERENS RIVER FIRST NATION

The All-Season Road from Provincial Road 304 to Berens River First Nation Project (The Project) includes the upgrading and extension of the existing 74 km Rice River Road north of Manigotagan to Bloodvein First Nation and construction of 83 km all-season gravel road from Bloodvein to Berens River First Nation. The total length of the all-season road will be approximately 158 km. ⁽¹⁾



Study Area and Proposed All-Season Road Alignment

Recommended Route

Upgrade and extension of the Existing 74 km Rice River Road to Bloodvein First Nation (PR 304 to Bloodvein)



New 83 km all-season road along the existing Winter Road alignment from Bloodvein to Berens River First Nation



Note: (1) total length of road may vary depending on modifications made through input from community engagement, or engineering modifications made during detailed design.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) AND LICENCING

Before construction can proceed on the all-season road, ESRA is required to file an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) with Manitoba Conservation and the Federal Government. An EIA is required for all large scale projects and would be required to examine:

- Alternative route options
- Potential effects the project may have on the environment, communities, and residents way of life
- Potential ways to avoid, reduce or mitigate potential negative impacts
- Potential ways to enhance potential positive effects
- Follow-up and monitoring programs

The EIA is also reviewed by Federal and Provincial Regulatory Agencies to determine whether approvals and authorizations can be granted to the project to allow it to proceed including a Manitoba Environment Act Licence.

ENVIRONMENTAL LICENSING UPDATE

On November 5, 2009, ESRA filed its Environmental Impact Assessment with Manitoba Conservation which outlines the construction of a gravel all-season road from PR 304 east of Manigotagan north approximately 160 km to Berens River First Nation and includes upgrading and extending Rice River Road to Bloodvein First Nation. For the route from Bloodvein to Berens River, three route options were examined and presented to the public. Based on public feedback and community support, the Revised Shoreline Route, which is the closest to the shore of Lake Winnipeg and generally follows the existing winter road, was chosen to minimize environmental impact. The EIA demonstrates that with the implementation of mitigation measures outlined, the project can achieve an appropriate balance of minimizing environmental impact and meeting the needs of local communities for improved transportation access.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF THE EIA

Some of the key highlights identified in the EIA are:

- **Route Selection** – Pending final design, approximately 80% of the preferred all-season road alignment between PR 304 and Berens River First Nation follows the existing Rice River Road and hydro distribution line/winter road alignments eliminating the need to establish new rights-of-way and fragmenting undisturbed habitat.
- **Protection of Caribou Habitat** - The Revised Shoreline Route is on an alignment that is located west of areas of the highest caribou concentration (i.e. calving and wintering areas). The proposed route is considered to have the least potential to cause adverse effects to caribou in comparison to the other routes identified. In addition, a caribou monitoring program has been developed in consultation with Manitoba Conservation and the Eastern Woodland Caribou Advisory Committee;
- **Protection of Moose and Other Wildlife** – Specific measures will be employed to protect moose and other wildlife including the suspension of construction activities (i.e. blasting) during spring months when calving occurs and limiting right-of-way clearing work to winter months to avoid disruptions to nesting and denning activities.
- **Fisheries and Water Protection** – All water course crossing structures will be designed to meet Department of Fisheries and Oceans criteria for fish passage and Best Management Practices will be employed to control erosion and sedimentation including the use of silt fencing, rip rap, and vegetation.

- **Traditional uses of harvesting and country foods** – Best Management Practices will be applied during the construction and operation of the road to minimize disturbance to wildlife and the harvesting country foods due to noise and dust during construction, operations and maintenance activities. Fishers may experience positive effects as a result of the ASR, as it could provide improved access to some fishing areas.

In addition, the EIA also provides detail on a number of items including:

- **Community and Public Engagement Program** – The Environmental Assessment Engagement Program (EAEP) has been a fundamental and influential component of the Project's planning process as it engaged multiple parties in all phases of project development and for the duration of the Project's lifecycle. The EAEP allowed for an open forum for the sharing of information and knowledge between community members, stakeholders and the public and the Proponents.
- **Traditional Knowledge Studies** - The project team started with Traditional Ecological Knowledge studies (TEK Studies) in the communities within the study area. TEK studies provided important information and opinions, mostly from community elders and head trappers that were considered in the determining the potential environmental and cultural effects of project on the communities and the environment. In total, approximately 194 people from all of the communities in the study area provided their input in the process. The information was also useful for refining the actual road location and design as well as identifying potential areas of interest and sensitivity for local residents.
- **Environmental and Socio-Economic Baseline Studies** - This section of the EIA provides a summary of the current existing conditions of the environment within the study area, including the physical environment (soils, geology, water, climate), aquatic ecology, terrestrial ecology; socio-economic aspects; and archaeological and heritage characteristics.
- **Environmental Effects Assessments** – The EIA provides an analysis of environmental effects, including a summary of the methodology applied, mitigation measures considered to minimize or eliminate potential environmental effects, cumulative effects analysis and the significance of net or residual environmental effects. The overall conclusion of the EIA is that, with the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, construction or operation of the PR 304 to Berens River All-Season Road will not result in any significant environmental effects.
- **Mitigation and Monitoring** – The EIA outlines mitigation measures that will address potential environmental effects for the design, construction and operation phases of the Project. The supporting technical documents provide information on Environmental Protection Guidelines, Best Management Practices, and an Emergency Response Plan. Details associated with caribou and moose monitoring programs are also included.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The EIA maintains significant value in the community members and their opinions. This was done in two ways: 1) Community Engagement Plan; and 2) Traditional Knowledge Study.

- 1) **Community Engagement Plan:** The Community Engagement Plan is comprised of two rounds of community meetings:
 - a) **First Round** focuses on: providing information on the Project; create discussions on the Project to gather information and knowledge from the community members; and to help identify any issues or concerns.
 - b) **Second Round** will begin in December, 2009 to speak about the findings of the EIA; describe up-to-date project feature and changes; the results of the Traditional Ecological Studies; and gather more suggestions on possible mitigation measures.

- 2) **Traditional Ecological Knowledge Study:** TEK interviews were conducted in the communities of the study area to gather information useful for the EIA, as it: provided current environmental baseline information; identified traditional land uses; identified local information that may be considered as valued ecosystem components; identified potential effects and need for specific mitigation measures.

Communities that have been engaged by ESRA and SNC-Lavalin Inc. through this processes include Berens River, Bloodvein, Hollow Water, Little Grand Rapids, Pauingassi and Poplar River First Nations as well as the Northern Affairs communities of Manigotagan, Loon Straits, Princess Harbour, Seymourville, Aghaming, Berens River, Pine Dock, and Little Grand Rapids.

Community Input

Opportunities or benefits of the Project identified through community input, included:

- Cheaper costs on food, fuel, freight, services and supplies;
- Increase in employment and training opportunities;
- Increase in educational opportunities and educational infrastructure;
- Increased access to urban health care facilities;
- Increase in inter-community travel;
- Increased economic development within the region.

General concerns and opinions provided by communities focused on:

- Control over access to and the use of traditional/community land;
- Decrease in traditional activities
- Potential impacts to wildlife and the natural environment;

INCORPORATION OF COMMUNITY INPUT INTO THE EIA

Input provided by TEK surveys and CEP, in addition to technical studies undertaken in support of the environmental assessment indicates that appropriate consideration and application of Environmental Protection Guidelines (EPGs), Best Management Practices (BMPs), site specific mitigation measures, are important components of detail design and construction contracts.

The Importance of TEK and how it was valued in the EIA:

- The TEK information provided Aboriginal peoples and communities input into the EIA process by allowing community members to provide their opinions on the Project, thereby facilitating an open forum for information exchange and sharing;
- The TEK provided information (biophysical, cultural, or historical) that may have not been available through other sources;
- Assisted in the identification of potential environmental effects to: caribou, moose, medicinal plants, etc.;
- Lead to improved project design such as aiding in the identification of the preferred ASR alignment;
- Strengthened mitigation measures by accepting suggestions made by community members including: providing roadway patrols; establish control points; provide physical barriers; providing communities with the ability to approve resource and land development proposals;
- Built long-term relationships between proponents, Aboriginal groups, and/or Responsible Authorities.

All of the above will be discussed further in the Round 2 Community and Stakeholder Meetings.

WHERE CAN I VIEW A COPY OF THE EIA?

The EIA is a five volume report that has been submitted to the federal and provincial authorities and placed on the public registry and is available for viewing at;

www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/eal/registries/index.html or at the following locations in Winnipeg:

Public Registry Locations In Winnipeg

- Union Station, 123 Main Street, Winnipeg Manitoba;
- The Millennium Public Library, 4th Floor, 251 Donald Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba;
- The Manitoba Eco-Network, 3rd Floor, 303 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba;

Manitoba Conservation has also established a public registry locations in area communities and First Nations:

- Bloodvein FN Band Office
- Hollow Water FN Band Office
- Berens River FN Band Office
- Pauingassi FN Band Office
- Little Grand Rapids FN Band Office
- Little Black River FN Band Office
- Brokenhead River Regional Library, Beausejour
- Berens River First Community Council
- Little Grand Rapids Community Council
- Aghaming Community Council
- Seymourville Community Council

CAN I PROVIDE MY INPUT ON THE EIA?

Anyone interested to comment on the EIA can submit written comments by **January 7, 2010** to:

**Environmental Assessment & Licensing Branch
Manitoba Conservation
123 Main Street, Suite 160
Winnipeg, MB R3C 1A5**

WHERE DOES THE PROJECT GO FROM HERE?

The EIA Submission & Distribution – The EIA has been submitted to Manitoba Conservation and distributed to other federal and government review agencies, study area communities, and stakeholder groups.

The Harmonized EIA Review Process – The Project will be reviewed under the provisions of the March 2007 *Canada/Manitoba Agreement on Environmental Assessment Cooperation*. The province will be the lead jurisdiction and the federal authorities will provide comment through the provincial process. The province has established a Technical Advisory Committee to provide input into the EA process.

On-going Community and Stakeholder Involvement – Round 2 of the Community and Public Engagement is intended to present the findings and conclusions of the EIA, and to continue to obtain input to refine and develop the Project considering the interests of the communities, and other interested parties. Community engagement will continue during the detailed design, construction and operational phases of the Project.

Detailed Design Work (including site and geotechnical surveys, and archaeological investigations) will be carried out concurrent with the EIA Review process. The detailed design work will develop the information required to define specific construction works for the roadway, bridges, culverts, and drainage systems. This work will provide the basis for permit approvals or authorizations of key watercourse crossings, construction specifications, and construction tender documents.

Route Refinements – The final route alignment will be refined based on further input provided by the communities, and information derived from geotechnical and pre-construction archaeological investigations.

Conditions of EIA Approval, Environmental Permitting & Authorizations – The EIA approval of the Project will be dependent upon the reviews of the documentation by the Technical Advisory Committee and input provided by the communities and other interested stakeholders. Subject to the approval of the EIA, a number of other permits or authorizations will be required for example under the *Fisheries Act* or the *Navigable Waters Protection Act*.

Tendering – Construction Contracts- Construction contracts will **be** established for specific project requirements with qualified contractors. Training programs established with local communities will ensure that a significant number of jobs can be filled by workers living in the local communities.

Construction Awards – Construction Contracts will be issued for specific work packages for each stage of construction. A number of work contracts will be undertaken by First Nations Contractors, while some contracts associated with major bridge structures will be undertaken by specialized contractors.

Construction Works – Pending environmental approval, construction of the all-season road is scheduled to begin in the fall of 2010 and is anticipated to continue until the spring of 2014.

Environmental Monitoring – Construction supervision and environmental monitoring will be undertaken during all phases of the construction works. This will ensure that the Contractors and their workers comply with environmental policies, guidelines, and procedures and Best Management Practices are applied to various construction activities.

ROUND 2 - COMMUNITY /STAKEHOLDER MEETING SCHEDULE

Community	Location and Time
First Nation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hollow Water First Nation • Bloodvein First Nation • Little Grand Rapids First Nation • Pauingassi First Nation • Poplar River First Nation • Berens River First Nation 	<p>Hollow Water First Nation, Band Hall Monday, November 30, 2009 1- 4 pm</p> <p>Bloodvein First Nation, Band Hall Tuesday, December 1 from 10:30 am – 4 pm</p> <p>Little Grand Rapids, Band Hall Thursday, December 3, at 10:30 am</p> <p>Pauingassi First Nation- New Dream Lodge Thursday, December 3, at 2:00 pm</p> <p>Poplar River First Nation - Band Hall Wednesday, December 2, 2009 10:30 am - 4 pm</p> <p>Berens First Nation - Band Hall Meeting to be arranged on or after December 10 ,2009</p>
Northern Affairs Communities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manigotagan • Loon Straits • Princess Harbour • Seymourville • Aghaming • Berens River • Pine Dock • Little Grand Rapids 	<p>Manigotagan - Manigotagan Community Hall, on Monday, November 30, 2009 9 am to 12 pm approx</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="border-left: 1px solid black; border-right: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 60px; margin-right: 10px;"></div> <div style="font-size: 20px; margin-right: 10px;">}</div> <div style="font-size: 20px; margin-right: 10px;">→</div> <div style="text-align: left;"> <p>These communities included in Manigotagan Community Meeting as listed above</p> </div> </div> <p>Included in Berens First Nation Meeting</p> <p>Meeting to be arranged</p> <p>Included in Little Grand Rapids First Nation Meeting</p>
Other Stakeholders	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manitoba Metis Federation • Other Regional or Community Interests 	<p>Manitoba Metis Federation Offices, Winnipeg December 9, 2009 11:00 AM-1:00 PM</p> <p>To be determined and on an as required basis</p>

PROJECT CONTACT INFORMATION

Proponent Contact	Consultant Contact
<p>Mr. Doug Peterson</p> <p>East Side Road Authority Inc. 200-155 Carlton Street Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3C 3H8</p> <p>Toll Free Ph. (866) 356-6355 Fax. (204) 948-2462 Email: doug.peterson@gov.mb.ca</p>	<p>PR 304 to Berens River Environmental Impact Assessment:</p> <p>Mr. Stephen Lindley, M.Sc., MCIP., RPP Project Manager, SNC-Lavalin Inc. 2200 Lake Shore Blvd. West Toronto, Ontario M8V 1A4</p> <p>Tel: 416 252-5311 Fax 414 231-5356 Email: Stephen.Lindley@snclavalin.com</p>
<p>Dan Highway Community Liaison</p> <p>Tel 204-471-9863 E-mail: highway@shaw.com</p>	<p>East Side Lake Winnipeg Transportation Network Study</p> <p>Tim Stevens, P.Eng. Project Manager, SNC-Lavalin Inc. Vancouver, British Columbia</p> <p>Tel: 604-605-4961 Fax: 604 662-7688 Email: Tim.Stevens@snclavalin.com</p>
Project Websites	
<p>The East Side Road Authority has established a website to provide more information on the ESTI. This site can be accessed at:</p> <p>www.eastsideroadauthority.mb.ca</p>	<p>SNC-Lavalin has established two websites.</p> <p>The website for the Large Area Transportation Study can be accessed at:</p> <p>www.eslw.snclavalin.com</p> <p>The website for the PR 304 to Berens River All-Season Road Environmental Impact Assessment can be assessed at:</p> <p>www.m-br.snclavalin.com</p>



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