

Release

For Immediate Release
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\$2.25 MILLION COMMUNITY BENEFITS AGREEMENT SIGNED WITH WASAGAMACK FIRST NATION

Pilot Project to Assist in Determining Future All Season Road Route

Wasagamack First Nation - Today, the East Side Road Authority (ESRA) and Wasagamack 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 and will result in exploratory work being done to determine the potential alignment of the future all-season road.

"This agreement provides jobs and training opportunities for local residents in preparation for the construction of an all-season road in the region," said Premier Selinger. "At the same time, by focusing on an east-west corridor, the agreement also recognizes the historic and continuing cultural and economic links between the Island Lake communities and Norway House."

"We are very pleased to be signing this agreement with the East Side Road Authority that will provide much needed jobs and training for residents of our community," said Jerry Knott, Chief of Wasagamack First Nation. "Wasagamack and the other Island Lake communities are some of the most remote and isolated communities in the province and an all-season road will have major benefits for all of our communities. This is an important opportunity for our members to improve service delivery into our community."

"Through our public engagement process, the community of Wasagamack has expressed its desire for an east-west link as the alignment for the potential future all-season road route," said Ernie Gilroy, CEO of ESRA. "Although no final decisions have been made on the alignment of the all-season road, this pilot project is the first step in determining whether an east-west link is the most appropriate all-season road route for residents of the region as part of the East Side Transportation Initiative."

Under the agreement, an exploratory access road will be developed between Wasagamack and Norway House that will assist in determining the viability and potential alignment for a future all-season road. The agreement also establishes a construction training program for 2009/10 and 2010/11 that will provide training opportunities associated with gravel crushing, right-of-way clearing and road construction for up to thirty local residents.

Under the terms of the agreement, Wasagamack will be required to establish a separate corporate entity to undertake the pilot project and related activities. To assist Wasagamack in project management, to ensure appropriate oversight, and to provide mentoring, ESRA will perform project and contract administration services for Wasagamack. In the future, Wasagamack will have the opportunity to provide additional services such as gravel crushing and/or right-of-way clearing. The total value of the agreement is estimated to a maximum of \$2,250,000.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) setting out the basic principles of the CBA was signed by the parties on November 19, 2009. To date, ESRA has signed a Community Benefits Agreement with Berens River First Nation and MOU for a CBA with Bloodvein First Nation. Discussions are ongoing with other east side communities on future agreements.

For more information on the East Side Transportation Initiative, please visit the www.eastsideroadauthority.mb.ca or contact 945-4900 or toll free 1-866-356-6355.

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