

Summary of the Meeting

On June 2-3, 2020, members of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) on the Lake St. Martin and Lake Manitoba Outlet Channels Project engaged with representatives from Manitoba Infrastructure (MI) and Stantec Consulting Ltd. by videoconference. The meeting provided an opportunity for First Nations, Métis and municipalities to communicate with the proponent on mitigation and monitoring plans, and to gain an enhanced understanding of the project and the environmental assessment process, as outlined in the Environmental Impact Study (EIS).

The first TAG meeting was held in June 2019, at which the Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) heard concerns that TAG members' needs were not being met in the advisory process. The intent of the June 2-3, 2020 meeting was to address these concerns. Following each presentation by MI and Stantec, time was allocated for further discussion, questions and comments. Detailed notes of participants feedback during the meeting, has been compiled separately in a "Meeting Notes" document.

On Day One, MI representatives presented an overview of the Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin Outlet Channels Project, including: the Environmental Assessment (EA) process; the intent and design features of the project; water balancing models; and various mitigation and monitoring methods around ground water and surface water quality.

Day Two of the meeting received presentations focussed on the potential impacts of the project, specifically related to: fish and wildlife habitat; fishing; current uses of the area; human health and socio-economic conditions; and physical/cultural heritage sites of importance.

Key themes that emerged from participants discussions during the meeting included:

- To support access to relevant documents and comments on specific aspects of the project, the Agency's online Registry requires improvements, particularly to its navigation functionality
- The proponent has a responsibility to provide complete and accurate information, and maintain full transparency throughout the project
- The EIS contains critical information gaps and inadequacies, which are referenced throughout the information request process
- A requirement of the EIS is to address costs and benefits for affected communities, and how the project fits into the existing flood management control structures
- Impacts on fisheries, wildlife habitat, agricultural land, and sites of cultural significance require further consideration and consultation
- There are concerns that the new habitat created through this project, will not be of the same quality as the habitat that will be lost
- Economic impacts on communities affected by the project must be understood; negative impacts to fishing, hunting and other resource procurement activities would be devastating to the livelihoods of communities
- It is of concern to TAG members, and the responsibility of the Crown, to ensure that there is a well-defined project description and completed studies adequately incorporated into the EIS
- Further consideration is needed on the social determinants of health, and the potential impacts on the affected communities in the project area.

The meeting concluded with appreciation extended to all participants for their active engagement and contributions. MI confirmed the commitment to follow up with the Agency with responses for the TAG on a number of issues and questions raised, and the Agency agreed to continue to respond to questions from the TAG, as they are received.

Participants were assured that the EA report is a process that will be reflective of the engagement and consultation processes, and that further opportunities for discussion will soon be arranged.