



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 26, 2021

AMC challenges Manitoba to conduct an economic review of Manitoba Hydro in response to the Economic Review Commission of Bipole III and Keeyask

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – In response to the release of the independent review of the Keeyask hydroelectric generating station and the Bipole III hydro transmission line project (the Brad Wall Report), the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) Grand Chief Arlen Dumas noted the almost complete lack of reference to First Nations, and called on the Province to commit to conducting an economic review of Manitoba Hydro.

The Pallister government commissioned the report in 2018. Brad Wall, former Premier of Saskatchewan, was eventually engaged to complete the \$2.5 million independent review. It contains 85 findings and 69 recommendations.

AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas said, “The AMC has yet to conduct a thorough review of the Brad Wall Report and chose to not engage in what appears is political posturing between the current and former provincial governments. I think that the underlying issues for the commissioning of this report has been hyper politicized and we need leadership on all sides and meaningful First Nations participation to correct those issues and move together forward on the findings and recommendations.”

Grand Chief Dumas added, “From our preliminary review of the findings and recommendations, it is clear that the report is fundamentally flawed as it does not look at the underlying colonial assumptions and impacts on First Nations traditional and Treaty lands and inherent and Treaty rights. Since the inception of Manitoba Hydro, First Nations have been left out. All provincial governments have positioned Manitoba Hydro for their political gains. Forging a healthy relationship with First Nations should be any government’s most pressing issue in an age of reconciliation. In Manitoba, Manitoba Hydro must be at the forefront of such efforts.”

Bipole III and Keeyask are not projects that stand alone. They are part of Manitoba Hydro’s ongoing operation of the complex megaproject Lake Winnipeg Regulation and Churchill River Diversion that has affected many First Nations along Lake Winnipeg and in the North.

“Mr. Wall’s report clearly shows the Province and Manitoba Hydro’s colonial approach and disregard for Treaties including the Northern Flood Agreement Treaty. It affirms that the underlying assumptions and basis for the Province and Manitoba Hydro are wrong: that short and long-term planning of Manitoba Hydro continues to exclude First Nations. The Province must work with First Nations on the real issue: short and long-term planning on all provincial projects, including those that are intimately connected to the ongoing operation of the Churchill River diversion and the regulation of Lake Winnipeg. This includes the proposed permanent license for the Churchill River diversion and the regulation of Lake Winnipeg. An economic review of Manitoba Hydro as it relates to First Nations should inform this process.”

“The Brad Wall Report’s findings are particularly glaring given the extreme levels of energy poverty faced by First Nations on-reserve customers. The Supreme Court of Canada is currently considering the AMC’s application for leave to appeal (docket 39377) the unreasonable Manitoba Hydro rates that

require First Nations on-reserve residential ratepayers to make sacrifices that are considered unacceptable to most other Manitobans in order to procure sufficient energy. While First Nations people are struggling, the Province and Manitoba Hydro continue to flood First Nations land and impact our rights, for the purpose of exporting power out of Manitoba. The Brad Wall Report highlights the need for regular review of Manitoba Hydro's rates and capital expenditures, among other things, by the Public Utilities Board (PUB). It also shows that the proposed Bill 35 is inequitable and harmful in that it reduces or eliminates the PUB rate review hearings and attempts to eliminate the consideration of bill affordability or other socio-economic factors from the PUB's jurisdiction, providing Manitoba Hydro with less oversight to the detriment of First Nations and their citizens."

"Despite what the current provincial government's objectives are for Manitoba Hydro and despite its attempts to play politics and smear the former provincial government, First Nations in Manitoba remain focused on asserting their rights to self-determination and to developing their own utility companies and power authorities under First Nations' jurisdiction. I challenge the Province to conduct an economic review of Manitoba Hydro as a whole, work with the AMC on the terms of reference for its impacts on First Nations and as an act of reconciliation, commit to a process to ensure any future short and long-term planning of the Manitoba Hydro involving First Nations."

One recommendation relevant to First Nations from the Brad Wall Report states, "The Government should be open to equity options or other opportunities with Indigenous partners for all activities, including transmission projects like Bipole III. In addition to helping to fulfill the goal of reconciliation, such partnerships with Indigenous peoples may help to ensure that projects can be completed on schedule and on budget by allowing Manitoba Hydro to proceed with its preferred development option without delays caused by Indigenous opposition."

Grand Chief Dumas concluded, "The Brad Wall Report and party politics help to demonstrate that it is time for a First Nations Power Authority in this province, enabled and recognized under both provincial and federal legislation. AMC leadership continues to discuss this and will follow up with the Province in the context of this report to move forward."

-30-

For more information, please contact:

Stacia Franz

Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

Email: sfranz@manitobachiefs.com

Phone: 204-292-1504

About the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

The AMC was formed in 1988 by the Chiefs in Manitoba to advocate on issues that commonly affect First Nations in Manitoba. AMC is an authorized representative of 62 of the 63 First Nations in Manitoba with a total of more than 151,000 First Nation citizens in the province, accounting for approximately 12 percent of the provincial population. AMC represents a diversity of Anishinaabe (Ojibway), Nehetho / Inineew (Cree), Anishinew (Ojibwe-Cree), Denesuline (Dene) and Dakota Oyate (Dakota) people.