

Wuskwatim Generating Station General Civil Contract Awarded

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A contract for the Wuskwatim Generating Station's general civil construction work has been awarded to the O'Connell-Neilson-EBC Partnership in the amount of \$289 million. A Letter of Intent to award the contract was issued by Manitoba Hydro at the end of September and the contract was officially concluded recently. The consortium consists of managing partner H.J. O'Connell Construction Ltd., whose project office is in St. John's, Newfoundland; Neilson Inc. from Saint-Nicholas, Quebec; and EBC Inc. from L'Ancienne-Lorette, Quebec. Under the Wuskwatim Power Limited Partnership (WPLP), Manitoba Hydro manages the project, including the tendering process.

The general civil work remaining at Wuskwatim entails building the earth dams and dykes, the concrete structures that comprise the generating station itself, as well as rock excavation, maintaining roads and cofferdams. In addition, the consortium will be responsible for supplying and installing the powerhouse walls, roof, and superstructure steel. A key feature of the contract is a schedule that advances the in-service date of the generating station to 2011.

Since the start of construction at Wuskwatim in 2006, a 48 km access road has been constructed. The upstream containment dyke and the stage one upstream and downstream cofferdams have been completed. Starting at the end of 2007, 600,000 cubic metres of overburden and 450,000 cubic metres of rock have been excavated to date for the powerhouse and spillway structures and channels. The site's infrastructure—including power line, communications, camp, offices, and associated sewer and water—are complete.

The Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro, the Hon. Greg Selinger, congratulated the Partnership, noting, "This is a key milestone in the development of a ground-breaking, renewable energy project that directly benefits northern Aboriginals while adding to the province's already impressive fleet of renewable energy resources."

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Manitoba Hydro President and CEO Bob Brennan noted that, “The awarding of the civil contract is a key benchmark of progress on the project. Wuskwatim is a unique project which is serving as a model for future project development, in Manitoba and in other parts of the country. There is a lot of interest in the partnership model from other jurisdictions.”

Jim Moore, Chief of Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation said, “Confirmation that the contract has been awarded is important to our Members as they have a lot at stake in this project, which is intended to provide us with long-term benefits from resource development within our traditional territory. This step brings certainty to the cost of the project and will help in our ongoing planning to take advantage of this investment opportunity.”

The 200-megawatt Wuskwatim project—approximately 45 km southwest of Thompson on the Burntwood River—is being developed by the WPLP, a legal entity involving Manitoba Hydro and the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation (NCN). Manitoba Hydro is providing construction and management services to WPLP, in accordance with the Project Development Agreement signed in June 2006. The Wuskwatim project remains within its 2007 estimate and continues to be the most economic means of meeting Manitoba load and is projected to be profitable for the Wuskwatim Power Limited Partnership.

Project employment peaked at just over 400 workers throughout the past year and approximately 65 per cent of the workers were Aboriginal. Since 2001, more than 1900 prospective Aboriginal workers have participated in training associated with Wuskwatim and future projects. In addition, over \$80 million was spent on goods and services purchased from northern Manitoba Aboriginal businesses.

The original general civil contract was tendered in 2007 and only one bid was received. As a result, the tender was subsequently cancelled. Manitoba Hydro, acting as Project Manager, divided the originally planned work into smaller construction contracts and Peter Kiewit & Sons Ltd. was awarded the contract to do overburden and initial rock excavation and construct the stage one cofferdams. Pennecon was awarded a second contract to do structures area rock excavation and concrete aggregate production.

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