

## 2023-14 Ethical Energy: Supporting Indigenous-led local alternative energy projects in Manitoba

Mover: Wa Ni Ska Tan Alliance of Hydro-Impacted Communities

The Province of Manitoba and its crown corporation Manitoba Hydro should work with Indigenous communities in a spirit of reconciliation and collaboration to support and remove barriers for Indigenous community-owned, Indigenous-led, local-scale energy generation; including:

- The Province of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro provide local and regional economic opportunities that do not appropriate Indigenous knowledge.
- Manitoba Hydro remain publicly owned and committed to working in a spirit of collaboration with all hydro-impacted communities to redress the losses of Indigenous cultural and economic heritage;
- The Province of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro cease new planning or building of dams in the Province.
- The Province of Manitoba commits to an independent operational review of Manitoba Hydro to address past and present hydro impacts on nearby communities and environments. The review should include recommended pathways to increase transparency and accountability, including more accessible data and general user information to better understand how energy is being used and charged in the province while protecting individual privacy.
- The Province of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro commit more to the development of community-owned, Indigenous-led, local-scale energy generation through strategies like a renewed Social Enterprise development strategy, social financing to support the development of enterprises and projects, and supporting Indigenous energy sovereignty.

**Because:** Manitoba lies within the ancestral lands and traditional territories of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene Peoples, Inuit, and on the National Homeland of the Red River Métis;

**Because:** Manitoba First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples are Aboriginal peoples as so defined within the constitution of Canada. Aboriginal peoples in Manitoba possess Aboriginal rights, as well as inherent and treaty rights, where applicable.

**Because:** Manitoba, through its publicly owned and governed utility Manitoba Hydro, produces over 97% of the hydropower used in Manitoba and serves more than 608,500 electric customers. Thus making hydropower of key economic importance to Manitoba.

**Because:** Manitoba Hydro operates 16 generating stations as part of its integrated system in Manitoba, most of which lie on the traditional lands of First Nations communities, who have experienced and continue to experience many dramatic and adverse impacts as a result of hydro-related development. The production of hydropower has been largely unethical. Manitoba Hydro can improve how it shares user information to better understand how energy is being used and charged in the province, in order to help facilitate Indigenous community-owned, Indigenous-led, local-scale energy generation.

**Because:** Large-scale hydropower projects (megadams) contribute to climate change and produce greenhouse emissions through the flooding of shorelines and forests in the creation of reservoirs.<sup>7</sup> In addition, the manipulation of water levels results in the ongoing production of greenhouse gas emissions<sup>8</sup>. Thus large-scale hydropower is not a climate solution, “green energy” or carbon neutral.

**Because:** The Province can transition off fossil fuels without building any new dams, while exceeding energy targets set by Manitoba Hydro and meet the estimated energy load growth to 2050.<sup>9</sup>

**Because:** The interest in local-scale alternative energy for Indigenous communities has increased due to its potential for self-determination, energy justice, a reduced reliance on outside energy sources, and need for viable alternatives to diesel for off-grid communities.<sup>10</sup> There is also interest in its role for facilitating reconciliation.<sup>11</sup>

**Because:** Nominal steps have been taken toward providing economic opportunities in northern Manitoba, particularly where new developments are concerned, yet many First Nations communities have not benefited in any meaningful way from hydro development.

**Because:** The Province of Manitoba formally apologized to First Nations communities affected by northern hydropower on January 20th, 2015, acknowledging the damages hydropower has inflicted on the environment, livelihoods, cultural identity, transportation, and way of life, and passed The Path to Reconciliation Act in March of 2016. Drawing upon the Truth and Reconciliation’s Call to Actions and principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, this legislation commits the Province of Manitoba to act in a spirit of reconciliation.

**Because:** This resolution fits within the Tackling Climate Change theme, as climate action and resilience will be driven through Indigenous and local solutions, as well as the Local & Fair Economies theme supporting an increase in community-owned solutions.

**How this Resolution will be Advanced:** The Wa Ni Ska Tan Alliance of Hydro-Impacted Communities would like to take the lead on advocating for this resolution with support from CCEDNet Manitoba staff. Wa Ni Ska Tan would like to work closely with members interested in supporting this resolution. This could include asking for solidarity from other members, a working group facilitated by Wa Ni Ska Tan, or asking for endorsements on letters or campaigns. CCEDNet can include this in Network provincial government relations work, including in budget submissions.

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<sup>7</sup> Lu, S., Dai, W., Tang, Y., & Guo, M. 2020. A Review of the Impact of Hydropower Reservoirs on Global Climate Change. *The Science of the Total Environment*. 711, 2-5.

<sup>8</sup> Scherer, L., & Pfister, S. 2016. Hydropower’s Biogenic Carbon Footprint. *PLoS ONE* 11(9)

<sup>9</sup> Climate Action Team. 2020. Manitoba’s Road to Resilience: A Community Climate Action Pathway to a Fossil Fuel Free Future. Vol. 2 Energy Solutions. 1.0 [https://climateactionmb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/CAT-Manitoba\\_Road\\_to\\_Resilience-Volume2-FIN-WEB.pdf](https://climateactionmb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/CAT-Manitoba_Road_to_Resilience-Volume2-FIN-WEB.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Gilpin, E. 2017. First Nations powering up B.C. *National Observer*. December 4, 2017. <https://www.nationalobserver.com/2017/12/04/news/first-nations-powering-bc>

<sup>11</sup> Mang-Benza, C., Baxter, J., & Smith Fullerton, R. 2021. New discourses on energy transition as an opportunity for reconciliation? Analyzing Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Communications in Media and Policy Documents. *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 12:1-27