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LAKE MANITOBA AND LAKE ST. MARTIN OUTLET CHANNELS

In the last 100 years, Manitoba has experienced several major floods. The flood of 2011 was unique in that high flows were recorded on almost all streams and rivers in the Assiniboine River and Lake Manitoba watersheds. For a flood event like this to occur on one or two major rivers is rare, let alone for a flood to occur over all of western Manitoba. The flood of 2011 highlighted several potential weak links in some of the existing flood control systems.

The financial impact of the 2011 flood was significant. Total costs exceeded \$2 billion, including 'Operation Return Home', rebuilding community infrastructure, disaster financial assistance and damages to municipal infrastructure.

On June 18, 2018, the governments of Canada and Manitoba announced an agreement-in-principle to cost-share \$540 million in new flood management infrastructure for the Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin outlet channels.

The project consists of building two diversion channels; the Lake Manitoba Outlet Channel, with a length of 24.1 kilometres, will run north from Watchorn Bay on Lake Manitoba to Birch Bay on Lake St. Martin. In addition, the Lake St. Martin Outlet Channel with a length of 23.8 kms will run northeast from Lake St. Martin to Lake Winnipeg south of Willow Point. The project also involves building a number of bridges and water control structures, a 24-kilovolt distribution line and adjusting surrounding highway infrastructure.

During times of flooding and high water levels on Lake Manitoba, the new outlet channel will carry water directly from Lake Manitoba to Lake St. Martin. The Fairford River is the natural outlet to Lake St. Martin. The Lake St. Martin channel will move water directly to Lake Winnipeg. The Dauphin River is the natural outlet to Lake Winnipeg from Lake St. Martin. Construction of the channels will significantly reduce the risk of flood damage for First Nations located along Lake St. Martin, complementing other regional flood protection infrastructure to ensure a more comprehensive water control network that enables the province to manage effectively flows from the Assiniboine River and Lake Manitoba watersheds spanning Manitoba, southeast Saskatchewan and northeast North Dakota. Together, the channels will allow Manitoba to provide flood protection to individuals, businesses, communities and farmland around Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin.

The new Lake Manitoba outlet channel is designed with a capacity of 7,500 cubic feet per second (cfs) and the Lake St. Martin channel will carry approximately 11,500 cfs at capacity. The current capacity of the Lake St. Martin Emergency Outlet Channel is approximately 4,000 cfs. The existing single Lake St. Martin emergency channel to Lake Winnipeg will be available on an emergency basis during construction.

More information on the Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin Outlet Channels Project can be found at www.manitoba.ca/mit/wms/lmb/lsmtoutlets/.