



Wataynikaneyap Power Completes Construction of “the Line that Brings Light”

(December 13, 2024 - Fort William First Nation, Ontario) Wataynikaneyap Power is pleased to announce that all assets of the Wataynikaneyap Power transmission system have been energized! The infrastructure megaproject includes 1,800 kilometres of transmission lines and 22 substations in northwestern Ontario.

Wataynikaneyap Power is a licensed transmission company majority-owned by a partnership of 24 First Nations in partnership with Fortis Inc. and other private investors, regulated by the Ontario Energy Board.

The Wataynikaneyap Power transmission system will connect 17 remote First Nation communities to the Ontario power grid. Additional connection facts:

- The connection of 12 First Nations is complete, removing their reliance on diesel-generated electricity.
- The transmission assets of four First Nations are energized, and these communities are working through their Independent Power Authority processes before they can be connected.
- Wataynikaneyap Power will continue working with McDowell Lake First Nation, the 17th community, to become grid-connected in the future.

On December 11, 2024, Wataynikaneyap Power held a gathering in Thunder Bay to celebrate the completion of the transmission system’s construction.

Development

“This gathering marks the achievement of First Nations working together tirelessly for 35 years to connect the communities to the transmission grid,” remarked Margaret Kenequanash, CEO of Wataynikaneyap Power. “Well before this project started in 2008, the First Nations in the area agreed to work on energy as a regional issue. Owning infrastructure in our Homelands and building a solid foundation for our future generations has been a success and it must continue. This accomplishment is from the collective vision and direction from all the 24 First Nations working together and supported by the partner, Fortis Inc.”

“We did it,” said Frank McKay, Board Chair for the Wataynikaneyap Power General Partnership. “We received our mandate from the Chiefs – bring clean, reliable power to the First Nations, and maintain ownership of any infrastructure on the Homelands. And we delivered.”

As a First Nations-led initiative, the Wataynikaneyap Power transmission system follows regulatory requirements and respects Indigenous protocols, Rights, and way of life. The project follows Guiding Principles, which are given by the First Nations leadership and supported by industry partners. The Guiding Principles include respect, meaningful participation, and engagement.

The 24 First Nation partnership also established Opiikapawiin Services to provide engagement, skills development, and community readiness services through a service agreement for the transmission system. Since 2012, there have been close to 3,000 engagements recorded.

"Meaningful engagement with communities included translators, and in person presentations," said Lucie Edwards, CEO of Opiikapawiin Services. "Opiikapawiin Services has held 55 training programs since 2017, where Indigenous Knowledge and Land-Based Learning is integrated with modern Western training methodologies. We are dedicated to fostering a holistic approach to skill development, while strengthening cultural resiliency. It is inspiring to see First Nations youth advance their skills, knowledge, and gifts through these training programs, embodying a stronger future for their communities."

Partnership

In August 2015, Wataynikaneyap Power achieved a new milestone through a partnership with Fortis Inc. and Renewable Energy Systems Canada Inc. (the latter has since stepped away from the project).

"We could not have done this without Fortis," Eliezar McKay, First Nation LP Board Chair, stated. "We chose Fortis as our partner because they supported our vision of First Nation-majority ownership. It is a true partnership that is built upon trust, respect, and a common goal. On behalf of the Chiefs and the First Nations, we thank Fortis."

"Today, we celebrate not just a milestone in our partnership, but the deep bonds of friendship and trust we have built with our First Nations partners," said David Hutchens, President and CEO, Fortis Inc. "This project is a testament to our shared vision and commitment to a brighter future for all, providing reliable and affordable energy as the backbone of social and economic prosperity for generations to come."

Construction

The Wataynikaneyap Power Project was the construction of approximately 1,800 kilometres of a 230 kV, 115 kV, 44 kV, 25 kV alternating current power transmission system in northwestern Ontario.

"Being part of the Wataynikaneyap Power Project is a source of immense pride for us at Hatch, as it stands as an unprecedented and transformative First Nations-owned project. It not only empowers communities, but also paves the way for a sustainable future, showcasing true resilience and vision," remarked Adeel Afzal from Hatch, the project's Owner's Engineer. "On a personal note, the project provided me the opportunity to meet great people doing great things, which I will always cherish."

Wataynikaneyap Power announced the notice to proceed to Valard Construction for the Wataynikaneyap Power Project on October 29, 2019, once Environmental Assessments and financing were approved and engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) contract negotiations were completed.

"I am incredibly proud of our team at Valard for completing the monumental task of building the Wataynikaneyap Power Project," remarked Valard Construction President, Carey Kostyk. "Many in the industry doubted that one company could build all three phases of the project and deliver it successfully. We celebrate the quality-of-life improvements this project has brought to Indigenous communities. Valard is honoured to have played such a pivotal role in the Wataynikaneyap Power Project, a venture that brings light, and is powering the future for the communities of northwestern Ontario."

Government Support

First Nations were experiencing significant challenges and issues because of lack of reliable power. Continuing to use diesel generation for primary power affected community health and safety, quality of life, and capacity for growth. Reliable power makes growth and development possible, such as new housing and infrastructure. Grid connection will have a significant impact for the First Nations, which were previously constrained by expensive and environmentally-unsustainable diesel generators already at capacity.

The negotiations for support of the Ontario and Canadian governments have been crucial to the development and building of the transmission system.

Said the Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario (FedNor): "Reliable power is essential for the health, safety, and growth of First Nations communities. For too long, these communities faced significant challenges due to reliance on diesel generation, which strained their quality of life and limited opportunities for housing, infrastructure, and development. Connecting to the power grid will transform these communities, enabling sustainable growth and improving overall well-being. The partnership and support of the Ontario and Canadian governments have been critical in making this transmission system a reality, creating lasting benefits for the communities it serves."

On March 22, 2018, Canada announced \$1.55 billion in Federal funding to pay for the Ontario loan and other costs. The cost to complete the construction of the transmission system is approximately \$1.8 billion plus additional costs and was financed by Ontario and Senior Bank lenders and equity contributions by owners.

"Completing this project is a gamechanger for Indigenous communities along the line, as we bring light and hope to thousands of families across Northern Ontario," said the Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Energy and Electrification. "Our government is proud to support this achievement as we support a better quality of life and local economy for some of the most remote First Nation communities in the province. While this project is already leaving its mark, having created new good-paying jobs across the north, its legacy will be the new opportunities it creates for Indigenous communities, including new housing, jobs, and educational opportunities for the next generation."

"This milestone marks a transformative moment in Ontario's efforts to deliver clean, reliable power to remote communities," said the Honourable Sam Oosterhoff, Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries, who was in attendance on December 11th. "Led by Wataynikaneyap Power, the completion of construction brings critical infrastructure and new opportunities for growth and community development across Ontario and improves the quality of life for thousands in remote First Nation communities."

What's Next?

Wataynikaneyap Power is a licensed power transmitter and a utility regulated by the Ontario Energy Board, guided by the First Nations through the Guiding Principles.

Wataynikaneyap Power and the EPC Contractor are currently discussing other construction costs related to COVID-19 and the 2021 summer forest fires.

Wataynikaneyap Power is developing programs that focus on permanent access, vegetation management, emergency response, environmental monitoring, and capacity building. Wataynikaneyap Power will continue to engage the First Nations on these matters.

“Capacity building means moving forward to achieve complete ownership of the transmission company. In 25 years, the First Nations maintain the right to own 100% of the transmission system. The focus now will be educating young professionals on career paths that will enable this vision,” concluded Margaret Kenequanash. “Building the transmission system will improve quality of life and address the immediate needs of the communities. Keeping the vision will require a lot of planning by our People and it is for the future generations to thrive.”

December 11, 2024, Photos:



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Frank Mckay, Margaret Kenequanash, Harry Meekis (FNLP Executive Council), and Lucie Edwards celebrate the end of the Wataynikaneyap Power transmission system’s construction.



The Hon. Sam Oosterhoff, Associate Minister of Energy-Intensive Industries, presents a gift to Margaret Kenequanash.

About Wataynikaneyap Power

Wataynikaneyap Power is a licensed transmission company majority-owned by a partnership of 24 First Nations in partnership with Fortis Inc. and other private investors, regulated by the Ontario Energy Board. FortisOntario Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Fortis Inc., acts as the project manager through its wholly owned subsidiary, Wataynikaneyap Power PM Inc. The 24 First Nations also established Opiikapawiiin Services to lead the community engagement and participation for Wataynikaneyap Power LP. To connect remote communities to the electrical grid, Wataynikaneyap Power is developing, managing construction, and operating approximately 1,800 kilometres of transmission lines and 22 substations in northwestern Ontario. For further information, please visit: www.wataypower.ca.

Wataynikaneyap Power recognizes that the land on which Wataynikaneyap has its head office is in the Homeland of Animikiii Wajiw. Gitchi Gami Anishnabek are signatory to Robinson-Superior Treaty of 1850.

About First Nation Limited Partnership

First Nation Limited Partnership (FNLP) is a partnership of 24 First Nations in Northwestern Ontario working together to connect 17 remote communities currently powered by diesel generation stations. FNLP was established in 2015 to be the ownership and control of the participating First Nations' interest in Wataynikaneyap Power LP. The 51% interest in Wataynikaneyap Power LP is equally owned by each of the 24 First Nation communities and FNLP will maintain their ability to increase their ownership to 100% over time.

About Fortis

Fortis is a well-diversified leader in the North American regulated electric and gas utility industry with 2023 revenue of \$12 billion and total assets of \$69 billion as of June 30, 2024. The Corporation's 9,600 employees serve utility customers in five Canadian provinces, ten U.S. states and three Caribbean countries. Fortis shares are listed on the TSX and NYSE and trade under the symbol FTS. Additional information can be accessed at www.fortisinc.com, www.sedar.com, or www.sec.gov.

About Opiikapawiiin Services

Opiikapawiiin Services LP (OSLP) was established by a partnership of 24 First Nations in Northwestern Ontario. OSLP is primarily responsible for administering projects and programs for Wataynikaneyap Power PM through a service agreement, relating to community engagement, community readiness, education & training, business readiness,

stakeholder engagement, communications, and capacity building. OSLP also supports the First Nation Partnership in the management of its investment in Wataynikaneyap Power. For additional information, please visit: www.oslp.ca

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