EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report summarizes the environmental assessment of the proposed All-Season Road linking Pauingassi First Nation and Little Grand Rapids First Nation to the Little Grand Rapids Airport (P7a All-Season Road Project). The environmental assessment report provides a description of the environmental assessment process; defines the scope of the project and the assessment; provides a description of the proposed project, a characterization of the existing biophysical, socioeconomic and Aboriginal environments and a summary of the Aboriginal and public engagement program; describes the potential effects of the project, potential mitigation measures and significance of residual effects; and outlines proposed environmental protection measures.

Environmental Assessment

The proposed P7a All-Season Road Project requires an Environment Act Licence for a Class 2 development of a two lane road including facilities and borrow pits under The Environment Act, Classes of Development Regulation (Manitoba). Community Access Roads on Pauingassi and Little Grand Rapids Reserve lands will require environmental assessments under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. The MESRA is cooperating with Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada on these assessments and is helping to coordinate the environmental assessment processes. The environmental assessment is conducted in accordance with Manitoba East Side Road Authority corporate and environmental policies, and satisfies Manitoba’s environmental assessment legislation. It is also consistent with the Canadian and international environmental assessment best practices and guidance.

Project and Assessment Scope

The scope of the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project includes pre-construction, construction, and operation and maintenance stages. The project components included in the project are: construction of a new all-season road; two one-lane Acrow panel bridge crossings; six culvert crossings and a number of equalization culverts; new quarry and borrow areas; temporary bridge crossings, temporary construction access roads and trails; and temporary staging areas and construction camps. It includes upgrades to the proposed All-Season Road, demobilization of temporary access roads, staging areas and construction camps, restoration of disturbed areas including quarries and borrow areas, and decommissioning of Acrow panel bridges and a short segment of the existing winter road.

The scope of the proposed P7a All-Season Road Project does not include approximately 3.4 km of Community Access Roads on Pauingassi First Nation and Little Grand Rapids First Nation Reserve lands. These access roads will be subject to environmental assessments under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act, 2012 following Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development procedures.
The scope of the environmental assessment includes identifying the purpose for the proposed project, and consideration of alternative means for carrying out the proposed road. The scope of the assessment also includes the identification, description, analysis and mitigation of potential adverse environmental effects, identification of any required follow-up actions, and evaluation of significance for any residual environmental effects.

The spatial boundaries for the environmental assessment consisted of project, local and regional assessment areas. The temporal boundary of the environmental assessment covers the normal life expectancy of the proposed Project, which is estimated to be approximately 100+ years.

**Project Description**

The proposed P7a All-Season Road Project is located on the east side of Lake Winnipeg and will extend approximately 38.1 km on provincial Crown land from Pauingassi First Nation south to Little Grand Rapids First Nation, connecting both First Nations to the Little Grand Rapids Airport. About 3.4 km of Community Access Roads will occur on Pauingassi and Little Grand Rapids First Nation Reserve lands, and is the responsibility of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada.

The project description includes ownership of the land, alternatives means of carrying out the project, construction stages, project components and activities, construction materials, waste products, workforce, schedule and funding.

The project consists of the following components including: All-Season Road, Acrow panel bridges, steel girder bridges, culvert stream crossings, temporary construction bridges and access roads, quarries and borrow areas, and temporary staging areas and construction camps.

**Description of the Environment**

The proposed project is located in the Boreal Shield Ecozone, Lac Seul Upland Ecoregion and the Nopiming Ecodistrict. The regional area consists of boreal forest vegetation, where tree growth is controlled by climatic and soil conditions. The description of the environment includes both biological and physical components of the environment in the regional and local assessment areas. The physical environmental components include climate, geology and surficial geology, soils and terrain, surface water and groundwater. The biological components include vegetation, wildlife, fish and fish habitat, amphibians and reptiles, wildlife and wildlife habitat, and species of conservation concern and cultural importance. Flora and fauna species of conservation concern and species of cultural importance are known to occur in the vicinity of the project.

The socio-economic environment of the regional assessment area is described for municipalities, communities, land use, infrastructure and services, parks and protected areas, and regional economic conditions. The Aboriginal environment is discussed with reference to First Nations, communities, treaty land entitlements, traditional land and resource use, services
and infrastructure, culture and heritage. The description is primarily the regional assessment area with particular reference to the local assessment area.

**Aboriginal and Public Engagement Program**

The Public Engagement Program provided opportunities for people to receive information about the proposed All-Season Road Project and to identify issues, concerns and opportunities on the proposed project. The Public Engagement Program included meetings with regulators, potentially affected and interested Aboriginal communities, First Nation Leadership, Manitoba Métis Federation, the general public, trappers, outfitters and other stakeholders.

To inform the Aboriginal communities and the general public about the project meetings and open houses, the engagement program included: newspaper advertising, local television and radio station advertising, direct mailings, phone calls, and websites.

**Environmental Effects Assessment**

The environmental effects of the proposed All-Season Road Project on the biophysical, socio-economic and Aboriginal environments were identified using published literature, other environmental assessments on east side Lake Winnipeg roads, and baseline study reports for the proposed Road Project. The environmental assessment approach, including methods for environmental effects identification and assessment, site visits, use of traditional knowledge, and Aboriginal and public engagement program conducted is described. Regional environmental issues and valued environmental components identified for the project-related environmental effects are discussed. Environmental effects are identified and assessed. Measures to mitigate adverse effects and follow-up actions are identified. Residual environmental effects are evaluated using methodology provided by the MESRA. Potential cumulative environmental effects are considered.

With the implementation of mitigation measures and follow-up actions, no significant cumulative environmental effects were identified for the proposed All-Season Road Project (P7a).

**Environmental Protection**

Measures to mitigate potential adverse effects for the proposed All-Season Road Project are provided in the environmental assessment report. The mitigation measures for biophysical, socio-economic and Aboriginal environment components as well as for accidents and malfunctions and effects of the environment on the proposed Road Project are broken down by construction phases and environmental components. Follow-up actions will be undertaken during construction of the proposed All Season Road Project and will continue through the operation and maintenance phase.

The environmental protection plan for the project will ensure that commitments made in corporate policy statements, environmental assessment, licences, permits and approvals are implemented and monitored. The environmental protection plan will provide sections relating to
environmental awareness training, environmental protection procedures and site-specific environmental protection plans.