

Notes:

On behalf of the Interlake Recreation Practitioners Association (IRPA) I would like to thank you for the opportunity to present out concerns about the Manitoba Hydro rate application.

IRPA is a new organization, officially formed in 2016, after many years as an informal meeting of recreation staff. IRPA represents the interests of recreation practitioners in the Interlake region as independent non-partisan organization. Typically, the IRPA will host professional development training, arrange facility tours and present new program and granting opportunities to our members. Advocacy is a new development for IRPA, but the proposed rates from Manitoba Hydro will have a very negative impact on the ability of our members to continue offering a wide range of recreation programs, services and facilities.

Recreation is an important aspect of quality of life throughout our communities, and the Interlake region hosts a variety of recreation opportunities, facilities and operating structures. There are approximately 100 recreation facilities across the Interlake. Recreation operates on models ranging from municipal departments to, municipally owned infrastructure with board governed operations, to fully owned and operated non-profits. The smaller communities and non-profits are going to be especially impacted if this rate application is approved as they have no fall back option to continue operations. An increase to hydro expenses can not be funded by these organizations.

An approved rate increase will mean facilities close. Potentially 20 – 50 recreation spaces across the region would likely cease operations (based on an informal survey of IRPA members and their local knowledge). An Arena for example would see operating costs increase about \$20,000 if the entire 5-year rate application is approved. The ability of facilities to make up this difference on increased rental rates is self-defeating as the local groups will need to fundraise from the community, increase user fees or request additional subsidy from their municipalities. All options will place additional stress on these community members and the community.

In the past MB Hydro has supported recreation facilities through advertising but even this token amount was recently cut as MB Hydro did not renew any of the long-standing advertising at rural arenas and curling clubs. It should be noted however that the funding for advertising with large private organizations such as the Winnipeg Jets was more than \$100,000 in advertising in 2016/17 (Global News). And MB Hydro is still a principal sponsor of several events, festivals and non-profit groups.

In closing the IRPA encourages the Public Utilities Board to take a long look at how this proposed rate increase will impact the recreation across the province and the implications of reduced recreation services would have on the health and social aspects across the Interlake region and province as a whole. I would like to make the board aware of the multiple cuts recreation has been subjected too as well. In the past two years funding has been cut by the province to the Recreation Opportunities Program, training funding has been eliminated, the Community Places Program paused for a full year and recently funding eliminated to the MB Community Services Council. These

developments taken together and with a potential 46% increase to our hydro rates make sustaining recreation programs into the future very difficult.

The IRPA is strongly against the proposed rate increase. The requested increase from MB Hydro will result in reduced availability of all recreation programs and services, increased costs for the remaining facilities and overall lower quality of life for residents of our region.