

Minister's Remarks: Wataynikaneyap: Grid Connection of Remote First Nations
Venue: Valhalla Inn, Thunder Bay
Date: March 22, 2018
Word Count: 907

- Thanks for that kind introduction, X person.
- Good morning/afternoon everyone.
- I'd like to first thank Margaret Kenequanash and Scott Hawkes for inviting me to speak today.
- I'd also like to thank X (federal MP *TBC*) for joining us.
- As well as everyone that took time out of their busy schedules to join us for today's special announcement....
- The Ontario government and the Government of Canada are partnering with Wataynikaneyap Power and FortisOntario to connect 16 remote First Nations communities to Ontario's electricity grid.
- A lot of effort has gone in to connecting these remote communities to Ontario's electricity grid.
- By partnering with Wataynikaneyap Power, we can move forward with bringing this projection to completion... and bringing clean and green power to these communities.
- Our government is committed to creating fairness and opportunity for all Ontarians. Access to stable, secure energy is a key part of our government's commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.
- Our Fair Hydro Plan and First Nations Delivery Credit have cut most on-reserve First Nations customers' hydro bills by over 50%. Ontario Regional Chief Isadore Day commended the Fair Hydro Plan as an important step to reduce poverty and empower First Nations communities.
- And I'm proud to say that power supplied from our grid is nearly free of greenhouse gas emissions.
- But as everyone here well knows, the 16 remote communities that stand to benefit from this project currently rely on diesel-powered generators to keep the lights on.
- And as everyone here well knows, the cost of diesel generation in remote communities is expensive – approximately 10 times more than the average cost of power in Ontario. ¹

Commented [GC(1)]: This could be revised based on who will be speaking at the event. Note that Margaret is the CEO of Watay Power and would be expected to speak and likely be the person who has extended the invitation to speak.

Commented [CR2]: Margaret has asked that we refer to the partnership as Wataynikaneyap. Watay is ok for internal docs, but we should use the full name in public facing material. All subsequent references have been replaced.

- That's where the Wataynikaneyap project comes into play.
- Over the next 40 years, connecting remote communities through the Wataynikaneyap project is estimated to save money when compared to continued diesel generation. ⁱⁱ
- Grid connection will provide the electricity needed for communities to grow and to support infrastructure investments. By having sufficient electricity delivered to the communities, further action can be taken to improve housing, education and health services, local water treatment systems and other essential services.
- And, in the process, greatly improve the quality of life in these 16 remote communities.
- But that's not all.
- We are working actively to promote Indigenous participation in development of energy initiatives and to ensure that Indigenous communities have the opportunity to participate in Ontario's strong, growing economy.
- In terms of economic development, the Wataynikaneyap project will provide a big boost to the local economy by creating new jobs....
- Wataynikaneyap estimates that 769 jobs will likely be created during the project's construction phase. ⁱⁱⁱ
- And I know Wataynikaneyap has already begun planning how to provide training to First Nation community members so they can take advantage of the range of employment opportunities the project will provide.
- The First Nation ownership and local employment opportunities will improve the employment prospects for today's and future generations of First Nation communities.
- Added to this: the Wataynikaneyap project will help reduce Ontario's GHG emissions – a key objective of the province's Climate Change Action Plan.
- In fact, through this project, Wataynikaneyap estimates that over 6.6 million tonnes of GHG emissions will be avoided over the next 40 years. ^{iv}
- That's the equivalent of removing 35,000 cars from Ontario's roads.
- For this reason – and the reasons I've just highlighted....
- Ontario's Ministry of Energy deemed Wataynikaneyap a priority in its 2013 Long-Term Energy Plan (LTEP).
- And re-asserted the project's continued importance in the 2017 LTEP.

Commented [IP(3)]: Policy: is this car-specific data available?
Note: MO requested this info in an email.....

Commented [GC(4R4)]:
<https://www.epa.gov/energy/greenhouse-gas-equivalencies-calculator>
Note that the EPA converts tonnes to cars driven for one year. So I divided the number by 40 years to get 35,000

- But there's another reason why Wataynikaneyap is important.
- And also helps explain why we're here today.
- And that's because this project – that was years in the making – is a testament to the importance of collaborative partnerships.
- Wataynikaneyap Power is an unprecedented partnership between 22 First Nations and FortisOntario.
- The First Nations in the Wataynikaneyap partnership have been driving this project for over a decade, and Fortis has joined them to make this project a reality that will truly benefit the communities.
- I also know Wataynikaneyap's long term vision is 100% First Nation ownership. This is an excellent model that I hope will be explored for other energy projects. I believe the funding agreement we have reached will allow for this vision to be realized.
- The Wataynikaneyap project has also required a collaborative relationship between Ontario and the Government of Canada.
- As you know, Ontario has long supported this project through our Long Term Energy Plans. We know the Wataynikaneyap project is the most cost-effective approach to electricity over the long term.

Our government is firmly committed to support Indigenous communities' access to affordable, reliable energy and full participation in economic opportunities in the energy sector.

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- I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the significant effort and commitment made by the Federal Government in developing the Memorandum of Understanding we are signing here today.
- What is front and center in my mind is that grid-connection cannot come soon enough. Communities need reliable and adequate power today. And it is this sense of urgency that will guide our efforts to see the grid connection completed.
- On that note, I'd like to thank you all for inviting me to speak today...
- I'd now like to introduce our next speaker, **TBC**.
- Thank you.