

MEDIA RELEASE

Northwestern Ontario Faces Major Obstacles to Powering New Mines

For Release: February 6, 2024

Thunder Bay: The Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association released a detailed analysis of the electrical needs of the region triggered by an unprecedented growth in mining and found the existing and proposed transmission system unable to meet the demand and the area short of power to meet that demand.

Jim Vezina, Co-Chair of the Task Force and Mayor of O'Connor, indicated that "there are a total of 41 major exploration projects, advancing to production, throughout the region with thirty-seven of those projects aiming to be operational no later than 2033. Thirteen of the advanced projects are for the strategically important critical minerals, 6 are copper-nickel palladium/platinum, 4 are lithium and there are 1 each of chromite, graphite and zinc."

"From an economic perspective 16 of the mines estimate capital expenditures totalling \$7.6 billion over the next 10 years with eight of the projects requiring 3,820 persons to construct the mines and nine will require 2,360 operating staff" Vezina added.

NOMA's Northwest Energy Task Force performed an area-by-area analysis and determined that new transmission lines, along with forest biomass and hydroelectric generation, are necessary to meet the 1,484 MW demand.

According to Task Force Co-Chair Iain Angus, the Task Force found "that even with the soon to be build Waasigan Bulk Transmission line there would be a significant shortfall of power in the Dryden, Red Lake, Ear Falls and Pickle Lake area. The Task Force also identified short falls in the area north of Nipigon, the immediate Thunder Bay area and in the Shebandewan area to the west."

The following are the recommended transmission solutions:

- Stage II of the Wassigan Bulk Transmission should be doubled in size and extended to Red Lake
- The Watay Power line from Red Lake to the Frontier Lithium Mine should be expanded
- Stage I of the Watay Power line from Dinorwic to Pickle Lake should be doubled in size
- The first phase of the bulk transmission line to the Ring of Fire should be routed through the Geraldton Community before the second stage moves north.
- Solutions need to be found to ensure that Thunder Bay can accommodate potential mining processing facilities.
- The transmission system west of Thunder Bay should be upgraded to not only provide power to the two mines under development but to stabilize the existing distribution system throughout that area

Angus also noted that “the Task Force also recognized the opportunity for an increase in the number of biomass generation facilities distributed throughout the region utilizing between 30 to 40% of the existing harvest. The Task Force has called for the IESO to reserve a block of MWs dedicated to forest biomass projects including bioheat & district energy procurement mandates for public building infrastructure.

In addition, the two major facilities with Power Purchase Agreements (Atikokan Generating Station and Thunder Bay Pulp and Paper) should be extended to 10 years and where feasible their energy output increased significantly.”

The Task Force also is calling for the Little Jackfish Hydro project to be proceeded with and that the total of 245 MW hydro electrical generation projects located along the Watay Power transmission lines be exempt from the IESO’s competitive process.

NOMA’s VP Kristen Oliver reported that “on December 13th, NOMA wrote to the President of Hydro One outlining the need for additional bulk transmission lines in the Northwest.” (Bulk transmission lines are paid for by the rate payer not the end customer).

Oliver also reported that “On January 27th, the NW Energy Task Force sent their detailed analysis in a document entitled Demand and Opportunity, Energy Challenges in Northwestern Ontario to Ontario’s Minister of Energy and Electrification, the Hon Stephen Lecce with copies to the Minister of Natural Resources, the Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products, Hydro One and the IESO.

Those documents have been and will continue to be shared with all of of the Provincial candidates in the Northwest who are seeking to be elected to Queen’s Park. It has also been sent to a number of Indigenous organizations and all of the Northwest Municipalities.”

A response to both letters from the President of Hydro One was received on January 29th

“If the Northwest is to benefit from the unprecedented mining development and the province is to benefit from having these mines connected to the provincial grid then who ever forms the next government needs to take these recommendations seriously and as a priority” concluded Oliver.

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For further information

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A copy of the following documents can be downloaded from www.noma.on.ca/energy-issues-

Letter to Minister of Energy and Electrification January 27, 2025

Letter to Hydro One re Energy Requirement in NWO December 13, 2024

Letter to IESO from NOMA re North of Dryden Loads December 3, 2024

Hydro One Letter to Energy Task Force January 29, 2025

Mining Projects by Geographical Groupings 2025

Demand and Opportunity Energy Challenges in Northwestern Ontario

Mining Projects Map January 14, 2025