



400-330 Portage Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3C 0C4

MANITOBA) Order No. 168/99
)
THE PUBLIC UTILITIES BOARD ACT) October 7, 1999

Before: G. D. Forrest, Chairman
D.L. Barrett-Hrominchuk, Member
J. A. MacDonald, Member

**CENTRA GAS MANITOBA INC. APPLICATION FOR
AN ORDER OF THE BOARD:**

1. **AUTHORIZING AND APPROVING A NEW FRANCHISE
AGREEMENT BETWEEN CENTRA AND THE RURAL
MUNICIPALITY OF PORTAGE LA PRAIRE**

2. **APPROVING THE FINANCIAL FEASIBILITY TEST AND
SCHEDULE OF CONNECTION FEES FOR THE SUBJECT
FRANCHISE AREA**

1.0 Background

On July 8, 1999 Centra Gas Manitoba Inc. ("Centra") applied to the Manitoba Public Utilities Board ("the Board") for interim ex-parte approval of a new franchise agreement between Centra and the Rural Municipality of Portage La Prairie ("Portage"), the financial feasibility test for expansion of the system to serve customers within the new franchise area, and the proposed schedule of connection fees to be paid by the new customers.

This application was supported by By-law No. 2875/99 of the Rural Municipality of Portage la Prairie authorizing the granting of a franchise to Centra pursuant to Sub Section 232 (1)(1) of The Municipal Act. By-law No. 2875/99 was certified as to having been read the first time on June 22, 1999.

Rather than proceeding on an ex-parte basis, a public notice describing the application and the manner in which the Board proposed to deal with the application, including a timetable for the orderly exchange of information, was issued on August 24, 1999.

The Board indicated that it would render a decision in respect of this matter subsequent to September 22, 1999. The Board's process did not involve an oral public hearing. This decision is based on a review by the Board of Centra's application, responses to the Information Requests, the submissions by Intervenor and Presenters, and Centra's responses to the intervenor submissions.

2.0 The Application

2.1 Franchise Agreement

Centra currently has franchise agreements for certain geographic areas of Portage. The proposed franchise agreement would encompass an area of Portage between existing franchise areas, but would not cover the entire area of Portage, as detailed on Appendix "A" attached to this Order. Portage gave first reading to By-Law No. 2875/99 on June 22, 1999 which authorized Portage to enter into a new franchise agreement with Centra, subject to approval of the Board. Centra submitted that Portage desired natural gas service in the new franchise area because of the strong prior relationships with Centra and to encourage economic development in the area.

2.2 Customer Attachments, Volumes and Forecast Revenues

Centra had been requested to estimate the cost of supplying natural gas to one industrial customer who is considering an expansion of its manufacturing facility in the proposed franchise area. A further review revealed the potential to convert several additional commercial and residential customers. Therefore, Centra undertook a market survey to quantify the potential customers and volumes. The market analysis consisted of a notification letter followed up by a door-to-door survey that identified a further 39 potential residential customers and 11 potential commercial customers. Consistent with prior practice, Centra did not consider any unheated or vacant dwellings and mobile homes to be potential service connections, for purposes of the feasibility test.

Potential annual volumes were estimated by assuming an average annual consumption of 2,832.8 cubic metres for residential customers, consistent with Centra's estimates in its most recent expansions. Potential commercial volumes were estimated using the equipment input method, and involved an individual analysis for each of the 11 potential commercial customers. The resulting potential estimated annual volumes are 110,000 cubic metres for residential customers and 381,000 cubic metres for commercial customers, for a total volume of 491,000 cubic metres.

Estimated annual volumes were determined by applying a first year conversion rate of 26% to potential residential customers, increasing annually so that 51% of all potential residential customers were assumed to be attached to the system by year five. No further customer attachments were assumed beyond year five. The first year commercial customer conversion rate was assumed to be 27%, increasing so that in the fifth year, 45% of all potential commercial customers were assumed to be attached to the system. The corresponding annual volumes were 29% of potential volumes in year one and 69% in year 5. Centra indicated in the Oakville expansion, in 1996, 36% of the residential and 70% of the commercial customers had attached to the system after the first full year of service availability. Centra indicated that a more conservative approach was adopted for the Portage feasibility test. Currently, 70% of the potential year one residential customers and 100% of the potential commercial year one customers have signed up for service.

Centra estimated annual revenues by applying the base sales and transportation service rates approved by the Board in Order 104/98, dated August 7, 1998. The year by year customer attachments and estimated annual volumes and revenues are detailed in the Feasibility Test, attached as Appendix "B" to this Order.

System Design and Capital Costs

Centra stated that there are no requirements to reinforce or upgrade the existing system to allow for this expansion. The distribution system would take-off from an existing 114.3 mm steel transmission line near PTH #26 and Highway 1A. A new regulator station would serve an 88.9 mm polyethylene ("PE") distribution main which will run easterly along PTH #26, then southerly to Highway 1A, a distance of approximately 4,040 metres. At this point the main will reduce to 60.3 mm and run easterly parallel to Highway 1A for a distance of approximately 9,450 metres. The outlet design pressure at the regulator station is 420 kPa, with a minimum system outlet pressure of 140 kPa. The projected distribution system design load is 651 cubic metres per hour. Centra indicated that all materials and construction techniques are or will be in accordance with all applicable codes, regulations, and standards.

Centra has submitted and received environmental approval for this project from the Department of Environment. The project is classified as a Class 2 development under Section II of the Manitoba Environment Act. Project drawings will be submitted by Centra to appropriate authorities upon project approval and completion of design.

Centra indicated that the installation techniques would be dictated by local conditions, but has proposed to install the PE lines by ploughing. Cost estimates for labour and materials were based on most recent supplier pricing and labour components of current construction contracts and previous experience in the area, and included the following allowances:

- 5% for labour and materials contingency
- 1% for interest during construction to contract labour and materials
- 24% for overheads, consisting of 9% construction supervision, 5% engineering, 4% Project Administration, 5% marketing, and 1% overhead contingency

Estimated capital costs are \$146,883 in the first year and \$187,149 by the end of year 5. Capital costs are also summarized in the feasibility test, attached as Appendix "B".

Feasibility Test Methodology and Results

The methodology used by Centra in this feasibility test is identical to that used in other recent applications, and reflect Board directives to use the weighted average cost of gas ("WACOG") for estimating gas costs. Centra used a WACOG of \$0.11948 per cubic metre, which was approved by the Board in Order 104/98. Other cost assumptions include:

- Annual operating and maintenance costs are \$100 per customer.
- Depreciation expense is specific to type of plant installed and is 3.08%, based on the Centra's 1998 weighted average cost for distribution plant.
- Municipal property tax is calculated using current provincial assessed rates and the applicable 1999 mill rate. Corporate capital tax is calculated at a rate of 0.5% of net plant, prior to any contributions.
- Income Tax calculation assumes a combined Federal and Provincial corporate rate of 46.12%.
- Overall rate of return is 8.893%, as approved by the Board in Order 17/98, dated June 19, 1998.

Applying the above cost assumptions and the calculated annual revenues to the 30 year NPV test results in a required third party contribution of \$145,611, with Centra's allowable investment being \$43,538. The feasibility test, attached as Appendix "B", details all 30-year NPV costs and revenues.

Funding Arrangements

The required third party contributions of \$145,611 are to be funded by Portage by the collection of proposed connection fees, additional property tax revenue generated by the project, debentures and government funding programs. Connection fees were calculated after Portage determined that one half of the required contributions should be paid directly by customers attaching to the system. The calculated connection fee for residential consumers is a flat fee of \$1,500. Variable fees are proposed for commercial customers, based on annual consumption, as shown on the attached Appendix "C".

Centra is of the view that, while the connection fees are considerably higher than those in other expansion areas, the high percentage of sign-ups indicates that consumers feel the fees are reasonable. Portage had already collected approximately \$48,500 in connection fees (\$10,500 from seven residential customers and \$38,000 from three commercial customers), prior to the Board issuing its Order 115/99 which required Centra to collect connection fees. Therefore, Centra is requesting the Board allow Portage to continue collect to the balance of the connection fees.

Centra has included a draft proposed Funding Agreement ("Agreement") with Portage whereby Portage agrees to deposit an amount of not less than \$50,000 upon execution of the Agreement. An additional payment of \$50,000 is to be made within seven days of project commencement, and \$43,611 within 30 days of completion of construction. The proposed Agreement contains two true-up dates being December 31, 2000 and December 31, 2004. If the amount of the required third party contribution were less than stipulated in the Agreement on true-up, Centra is required to refund the excess to Portage. However, should the calculated third party contribution be greater, Portage is under no obligation to pay additional contributions.

Intervenors and Presenters

The Consumers' Association of Canada (Manitoba) and the Manitoba Society of Seniors, ("CAC/MSOS") was the only party to register as an Intervenor in this process. In their submission, CAC/MSOS supported the application, provided that the Board was satisfied as to the reasonableness of the estimates and that existing customers would not be paying for any shortfall arising out of this project. A further request of CAC/MSOS was that the conditions upon which the application and project are being processed be consistent with past Board Orders.

On August 31, 1999, the Board received a communication from Hi-Tec Industries Inc. ("Hi-Tec"), the major potential industrial customer in the proposed franchise area. Hi-Tec supported the application, stating that the proposed expansion to their facility required natural gas, and that the savings flowing from the conversion to natural gas would be used to fund the expansion

4.0 Board Findings

The Board notes the proposed franchise agreement does not include the entire Portage area. The Company's evidence indicates that the remaining areas within Portage could be serviced by others and therefore the Board believes it is not unreasonable to restrict the new agreement to that areas proposed by Centra and Portage. The Board is satisfied that the terms and conditions of the proposed agreement are substantially the same as the existing Portage Franchise Agreements, and properly reflect current Board requirements. The Board will therefore approve the proposed franchise agreement between Centra and Portage.

Centra's method of estimating customer attachments and annual volumes remain unchanged from the approach adopted in previous feasibility tests for system expansions into new franchise areas. In this application Centra has used a more conservative estimate of customer conversions as compared to previous expansions. The Board is also aware that seven residential and three commercial customers have already signed up for service and have forwarded approximately \$48,500 in connection fees to Portage. Centra estimated ten residential and three commercial first year conversions for the feasibility test. The Board is of the view that the risk of these customers not actually connecting up to the system and using natural gas is relatively low, given the \$1,500 residential connection fee and larger connection fees for the 3 commercial customers.

The Board notes that now unlike any other system expansion the pipeline in Portage has been sized providing for customer growth. Excess capacity is part of all considerations and is factored into the feasibility analysis. While in the current system expansion proposal this excess capacity is higher than what is normally expected, the Board believes it is not unreasonable as the incremental costs associated with this expansion are small and further, as the estimates for growth are conservative. If the system were designed for a smaller pipe size, a relatively small incremental load would require pipeline looping at a far greater cost than the current system.

The Board will approve the system design and routing as submitted by Centra, conditional upon receiving all construction drawings prior to installation being commenced.

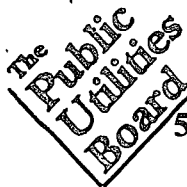
The other cost estimates used for feasibility test purposes are estimated in a manner identical to previous applications. The use of WACOG for cost of gas is as previously approved by the Board. The WACOG used is that included in the sales rate approved by the Board in Order 104/98, the last annualized sales rate approved by the Board. At this time, the Board is aware that costs of gas are expected to increase significantly in the short term, which will increase the cost to the consumers in Portage, as it will to all other Centra customers. While costs may increase, the Board is satisfied that customer conversion assumptions are conservative. Therefore the feasibility test results will not change, as increased gas costs will be offset by increased sales rates. The Board will approve the feasibility test on a final basis as submitted by Centra. The Board is of the view that all system expansions should logically be given final approval, conditional on all agreements being in place. The Board will also require Centra to file the results of all future true-ups for review by the Board.

Given that Centra's total allowable investment, net of contributions, for this project is \$43,538, the Board considers the risk to existing customers having to fund any project costs to be minimal.

Despite the fact that the majority of the connection fees from 10 customers had been collected by Portage prior to the issuance of Order 115/99, which directed that Centra collect all fees in the future, the Board will require Portage to submit all connection fees collected to date to Centra and will require Centra to collect these fees, effective the date of this Order. The Board notes that 7 residential and 3 commercial customers, representing 35% and 60% of potential year five residential and commercial customers, respectively, have already submitted the connection fees to Portage. The Board will



approve the Schedule of Connection Fees as submitted by Centra and Portage. Any future changes in this schedule must be filed by Centra for approval by the Board.



5.0

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT:

1. The proposed Franchise Agreement between the Rural Municipality of Portage La Prairie and Centra Gas Manitoba Inc. BE AND IS HEREBY APPROVED.
2. By-law No. 2875/99 of the Rural Municipality of Portage la Prairie certified as to having been read the first time on June 22, 1999 is hereby approved and shall be filed with the Board following third and final reading thereof.
3. The feasibility test as submitted by Centra Gas Manitoba Inc. BE AND IS HEREBY APPROVED, subject to the Funding Agreement between Centra Gas Manitoba Inc. and the Rural Municipality of Portage La Prairie being executed.
4. The Rural Municipality of Portage La Prairie should remit all connection fees collected to date to Centra Gas Manitoba Inc. and Centra should collect all connection fees in the future.
5. The Schedule of Connection Fees, attached as Appendix "C" to this Order BE AND IS HEREBY APPROVED until and if further amended by Centra and approved by the Board.
6. Centra Gas Manitoba Inc. file the results of the two true-up calculations within three months of December 31, 2000 and of December 31, 2004 for review by the Board.

THE PUBLIC UTILITIES BOARD

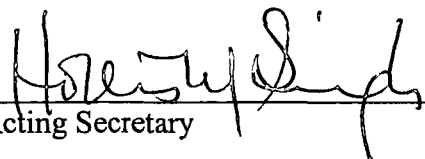
"G. D. FORREST"

Chairman

"H. M. SINGH"

Acting Secretary

Certified a true copy of Order No. 168/99
issued by The Public Utilities Board

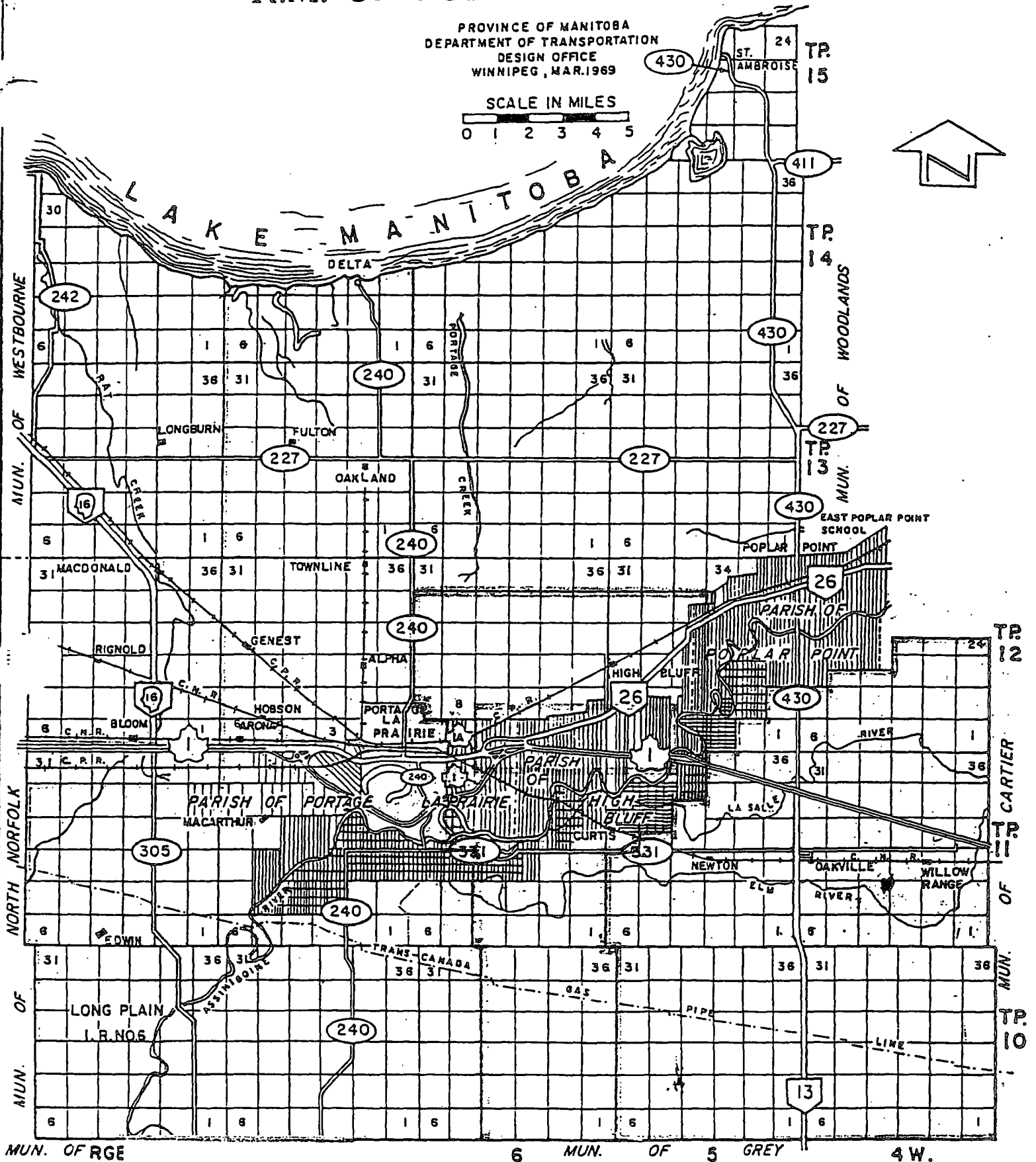

Acting Secretary

APPENDIX "A"

R.M. OF PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE

PROVINCE OF MANITOBA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
DESIGN OFFICE
WINNIPEG, MAR. 1969

SCALE IN MILES



Project Area

Existing Franchise Areas

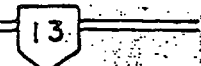
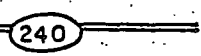
New Franchise Area

TRANS CANADA HIGHWAY

PROVINCIAL ROADS

PROVINCIAL TRUNK HIGHWAYS

RAILWAYS



APPENDIX "B"

Centra Gas Manitoba Inc.

Rural Expansion
Financial Feasibility Test

East Portage La Prairie Expansion

1 East Portage La Prairie Expansion (WACOG)

2	2010 (YEAR 11)	2011 (YEAR 12)	2012 (YEAR 13)	2013 (YEAR 14)	2014 (YEAR 15)	2015 (YEAR 16)	2016 (YEAR 17)	2017 (YEAR 18)	2018 (YEAR 19)	2019 (YEAR 20)
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3 OPERATING ASSUMPTIONS

4 Number of Customers	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
5 Annual Volume (10 ³ m ³)	337	337	337	337	337	337	337	337	337	337
6 Annual Volume (Mcf)	11,900	11,900	11,900	11,900	11,900	11,900	11,900	11,900	11,900	11,900
7 Projected Revenues	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587

8 RATE BASE

9 Gross Fixed Assets	\$187,149	\$187,149	\$187,149	\$187,149	\$187,149	\$187,149	\$187,149	\$187,149	\$187,149	\$187,149
10 Accumulated Depreciation	\$82,530	\$68,294	\$74,058	\$79,823	\$85,587	\$91,351	\$97,115	\$102,879	\$108,644	\$114,408
11 Contributions	\$94,956	\$90,532	\$86,109	\$81,686	\$77,263	\$72,840	\$68,416	\$63,993	\$59,570	\$55,147
12 Working Capital Allowance	\$1,684	\$1,684	\$1,683	\$1,682	\$1,681	\$1,680	\$1,679	\$1,678	\$1,677	\$1,676
13 Rate Base	\$32,018	\$30,876	\$29,335	\$27,993	\$26,651	\$25,309	\$23,967	\$22,625	\$21,283	\$19,941

14 REVENUE DEFICIENCY

15

16 Cost of Gas	\$40,222	\$40,222	\$40,222	\$40,222	\$40,222	\$40,222	\$40,222	\$40,222	\$40,222	\$40,222
17 Operating & Maintenance Expenses	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500
18 Depreciation Expense	\$5,784	\$5,784	\$5,784	\$5,784	\$5,784	\$5,784	\$5,784	\$5,784	\$5,784	\$5,784
19 Amortization of Contributions	(\$4,423)	(\$4,423)	(\$4,423)	(\$4,423)	(\$4,423)	(\$4,423)	(\$4,423)	(\$4,423)	(\$4,423)	(\$4,423)
20 Municipal Tax & Corp.Cap. Tax	\$9,185	\$9,156	\$9,127	\$9,098	\$9,069	\$9,041	\$9,012	\$8,983	\$8,954	\$8,925
21 Income Taxes	\$1,169	\$1,166	\$1,161	\$1,155	\$1,148	\$1,138	\$1,128	\$1,118	\$1,103	\$1,088
22 Overall Return	\$2,848	\$2,728	\$2,609	\$2,489	\$2,370	\$2,251	\$2,131	\$2,012	\$1,893	\$1,773
23 Total Revenue Requirement	\$57,264	\$57,113	\$56,960	\$56,808	\$56,650	\$56,493	\$56,334	\$56,174	\$56,013	\$55,850
24 Projected Revenues	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587
25 Revenue Deficiency (Annual)	\$2,323	\$2,474	\$2,627	\$2,781	\$2,937	\$3,094	\$3,253	\$3,413	\$3,574	\$3,737
26 Revenue to Cost Ratio	104.1%	104.3%	104.6%	104.9%	105.2%	105.5%	105.8%	106.1%	106.4%	106.7%

27 CONTRIBUTION REQUIREMENT

28 Total Contribution Required

Centra Gas Manitoba Inc.

Rural Expansion
Financial Feasibility Test

East Portage La Prairie Expansion

1 East Portage La Prairie Expansion (WACOG)

2	2020 (YEAR 21)	2021 (YEAR 22)	2022 (YEAR 23)	2023 (YEAR 24)	2024 (YEAR 25)	2025 (YEAR 26)	2026 (YEAR 27)	2027 (YEAR 28)	2028 (YEAR 29)	2029 (YEAR 30)
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3 OPERATING ASSUMPTIONS

4 Number of Customers	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
5 Annual Volume (10 ³ m ³)	337	337	337	337	337	337	337	337	337	337
6 Annual Volume (Mcf)	11,900	11,900	11,900	11,900	11,900	11,900	11,900	11,900	11,900	11,900
7 Projected Revenues	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587

8 RATE BASE

9 Gross Fixed Assets	\$187,149	\$187,149	\$187,149	\$187,149	\$187,149	\$187,149	\$187,149	\$187,149	\$187,149	\$187,149
10 Accumulated Depreciation	\$120,172	\$125,936	\$131,700	\$137,465	\$143,229	\$148,993	\$154,757	\$160,521	\$166,286	\$172,050
11 Contributions	\$50,723	\$46,300	\$41,877	\$37,454	\$33,031	\$28,607	\$24,184	\$19,761	\$15,338	\$10,914
12 Working Capital Allowance	\$1,875	\$1,874	\$1,873	\$1,872	\$1,871	\$1,870	\$1,870	\$1,869	\$1,868	\$1,867
13 Rate Base	\$18,599	\$17,257	\$15,915	\$14,574	\$13,232	\$11,890	\$10,548	\$9,206	\$7,864	\$6,522

14 REVENUE DEFICIENCY

15										
16 Cost of Gas	\$40,222	\$40,222	\$40,222	\$40,222	\$40,222	\$40,222	\$40,222	\$40,222	\$40,222	\$40,222
17 Operating & Maintenance Expenses	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500
18 Depreciation Expense	\$5,764	\$5,764	\$5,764	\$5,764	\$5,764	\$5,764	\$5,764	\$5,764	\$5,764	\$5,764
19 Amortization of Contributions	(\$4,423)	(\$4,423)	(\$4,423)	(\$4,423)	(\$4,423)	(\$4,423)	(\$4,423)	(\$4,423)	(\$4,423)	(\$4,423)
20 Municipal Tax & Corp.Cap. Tax	\$8,897	\$8,888	\$8,839	\$8,810	\$8,781	\$8,752	\$8,724	\$8,695	\$8,666	\$8,637
21 Income Taxes	\$1,073	\$1,058	\$1,038	\$1,019	\$999	\$978	\$956	\$933	\$910	\$885
22 Overall Return	\$1,854	\$1,535	\$1,415	\$1,296	\$1,177	\$1,057	\$938	\$819	\$699	\$580
23 Total Revenue Requirement	\$55,886	\$55,521	\$55,355	\$55,188	\$55,020	\$54,851	\$54,681	\$54,510	\$54,338	\$54,165
24 Projected Revenues	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587	\$59,587
25 Revenue Deficiency (Annual)	\$3,900	\$4,065	\$4,232	\$4,399	\$4,567	\$4,736	\$4,906	\$5,077	\$5,249	\$5,422
26 Revenue to Cost Ratio	107.0%	107.3%	107.6%	108.0%	108.3%	108.6%	109.0%	109.3%	109.7%	110.0%

27 CONTRIBUTION REQUIREMENT

28 Total Contribution Required

APPENDIX "C"

East Portage La Prairie

CONNECTION FEE SCHEDULE FOR NATURAL GAS SERVICE

Fee Structure	Site load	Fees per Site
Residential only	0-200 cfh	\$1,500
Class 2	201-350cfh	\$2,000
Class 3	351-600 cfh	\$4,000
Class 4	601-2000cfh	\$5,000
Class 5	2001-3000 cfh	\$10,000
Class 6	3001-4000cfh	\$15,000
Class 7	4001-9000 cfh	\$30,000
To be determined	Over 9000cfh	

One cheque required

Fee's Payable to R.M. of Portage La Prairie at time of signing up for natural gas service

Call the Centra office for service PH 857-6865

Centra will arrange for a onsite visit to determine the required fee.

1,000 BTUs = 1 CFH

1,000 cfh = 1,000,000 BTU

CFH= Cubic feet per hour

Site load will be base on equipment that may be converted to natural gas (maximum load)

Commercial customers will require a detailed site load analysis