



*For Immediate Release  
December 20, 2018*

**First Light Comes from Canada's Largest First Nations Led Infrastructure Project**  
*Pikangikum First Nation Officially Connected to Ontario's Power Grid through the Wataynikaneyap Power Transmission Line Project*

PIKANGIKUM, ONTARIO (December 20, 2018) — Pikangikum First Nation is the first community to officially connect to the Ontario power grid via the Wataynikaneyap Power Transmission Line Project (the "Project"). The Project is one of the most ambitious and transformative infrastructure projects in Canada's history, led by 22 First Nations communities.

Pikangikum is one of 17 communities in the North to be connected to Ontario's power grid. The community has gathered together with Wataynikaneyap Power to energize Pikangikum and to celebrate the achievement today with a Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony. These are the first Christmas lights in the community in over 10 years and symbolizes new opportunities for the people of Pikangikum. Today the switch that connected the community to diesel generated electricity was officially shut down and Pikangikum is now completely reliant on the Ontario power grid. It is a historic moment that has been long-anticipated and welcomed by Pikangikum's Chief, Dean Owen.

"Like many First Nations communities, Pikangikum has relied on aging and outdated diesel generators for electricity for far too long. With the connection of our community to the provincial power grid we see access to safe, reliable energy and, more importantly, we see a brighter future," says Chief Dean Owen Pikangikum First Nation. "Today, we see a future where there are jobs for our people, where our children can consistently go to school, where we can build, power, and live in new homes, and where there are business opportunities for even more growth."

Today's connection and celebration in Pikangikum is a remarkable achievement that follows the commitment made when Pikangikum joined Wataynikaneyap in 2016. There have been many years of planning and development work on the line since the First Nation communities gave a mandate to investigate the connection of 17 remote First Nations to the provincial transmission grid, premised on eventual 100% First Nations ownership.

"Our elders signed the treaty to share in the benefits of any major development that occurs in the homelands. Our people are leading the pathway by owning a major infrastructure with a vision of bringing light to our communities," says Margaret Kenequanash, CEO of Wataynikaneyap Power. "We celebrate with Pikangikum this remarkable achievement. Today, the line that brings light shines in Pikangikum and brings us one step closer to energizing across the North and realizing the hopes of our people and future generations."

The Government of Canada announced in August 2017, funding to connect Pikangikum First Nation to Ontario's power grid. Fortis was the construction lead and the project was completed safely and in time for Christmas. With minor upgrades in the future, the line will be used to connect other remote First Nations communities north of the community. It also provided opportunity for community members who participated in relevant training, to be employed during various stages of the Pikangikum project.

“Congratulations to Pikangikum First Nation, which will connect to the Ontario electricity grid for the first time on December 20th. Pikangikum’s newly completed transmission line enables the community to end their dependence on diesel as the primary energy source and opens the door to new economic opportunities and jobs powered by clean and reliable energy. Our Government is proud to invest in the Wataynikaneyap Power Transmission Project, a historic and Indigenous-led initiative that is working to connect 17 remote First Nations communities to the provincial electricity grid by 2023,” says the Honourable Jane Philpott, Minister of Indigenous Services Canada.

“The Wataynikaneyap Power Transmission Project improves the lives of families, and brings economic opportunity to the Pikangikum First Nation community,” says the Honourable Greg Rickford, Ontario Minister of Energy, Northern Development and Mines and Minister of Indigenous Affairs. “I’m proud of the role the Government of Ontario has played—working with Indigenous partners to help connect Pikangikum First Nation to the provincial power grid. This important achievement has brought light to Pikangikum, and lights the path to a brighter future.”

Currently, 17 of the 22 First Nations who own and are in partnership with Wataynikaneyap Power rely on diesel generators which have become financially unsustainable, environmentally risky and inadequate to meet community needs. A majority of the remote communities are at capacity with their diesel generators or face electrical load restrictions limiting the construction of homes and other critical infrastructure that would support community growth.

“We know how important access to safe, reliable electricity is for a community’s health, economic and social outcomes,” said Barry Perry, President and CEO, Fortis Inc. “We are proud to share our utility expertise and to transfer that knowledge to our First Nations partners to eventually operate and maintain the utility. Today we celebrate a significant step forward in creating further benefits for First Nations communities in northwestern Ontario.”

“The Pikangikum line represents the first of the 17 remote First Nations to connect to the grid. There are 16 more communities left to connect,” said Scott Hawkes, President and CEO, FortisOntario Inc. “Our team will continue to apply the same level of dedication and commitment to the remainder of the Project in support of our First Nations partners.”

“This Project has been built through the vision and leadership of our communities, along with the partnerships we have established with industry and governments. It is a precedent-setting initiative that gives our people hope and promise for the future,” adds Kenequanash. “We thank both levels of government and Fortis who have worked with us to get the line that brings light into Pikangikum – it is truly a historic day!”

#### **About Wataynikaneyap Power:**

Wataynikaneyap Power is a licensed transmission company, regulated by the Ontario Energy Board, equally owned by 22 First Nation communities (51%), who partnered with experienced industry leader Fortis Inc. (49%). FortisOntario Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Fortis Inc., and an electricity transmission and distribution utility holding company based in Ontario, owns 49% of the general partnership of Wataynikaneyap Power and acts as the project manager through its wholly owned subsidiary, Wataynikaneyap Power PM Inc. To connect remote First Nations communities to the electrical grid, Wataynikaneyap Power will develop, manage construction, and operate approximately 1,800

kilometers of 230 kV, 115 kV, and 44 kV lines in northwestern Ontario. For further information, please visit: [www.wataypower.ca](http://www.wataypower.ca).

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**Pikangikum Power Line Project  
Media Event Backgrounder**

*Pikangikum First Nation Officially Connected to Ontario Power Grid through the Wataynikaneyap Power Transmission Line Project*

**Summary:**

Construction Start:	October 2017
Construction Completion:	December 2018
Number of Jobs:	Approximately 300(Direct and indirect)
Total Length:	117km
Wataynikaneyap Website	<a href="http://www.wataypower.ca">www.wataypower.ca</a>

**Key Messages:**

- Pikangikum First Nation is the first community to officially connect to the Ontario power grid via the Wataynikaneyap Power Transmission Line Project (“the Project”). The Project is one of the most ambitious and transformative infrastructure projects in Canada’s history, led by 22 First Nations communities.
- Pikangikum First Nation’s diesel generating station has been at capacity since 2010. As a result, the community has been subject to electrical load restrictions. In addition, there have been frequent power outages and several catastrophic generator failures in recent years. In recent weeks, the community has been experiencing daily power outages.
- Education, health services, safe drinking water, food supply, safety and many other basic human necessities require the provision of clean, reliable, and accessible power. Over 80% of existing homes are without water and sewer service.
- The Pikangikum Power Line Project is the first segment of the 1800km Wataynikaneyap Transmission Project. The Pikangikum Power Line Project has been fast tracked due to the urgent need for the power line and proximity to the existing grid.
- With minor upgrades, the power line will be used in the future to connect additional remote First Nations communities north of Pikangikum.
- The Government of Canada announced in August 2017, funding to connect Pikangikum First Nation to Ontario’s power grid. FortisOntario acted as the project manager and PowerTel was the constructor for the project. The project was completed safely and in time for Christmas as committed.
- The project generated approximately 300 direct and indirect jobs throughout the construction phase with 10 percent First Nation employees

## **Background information on the Wataynikaneyap Transmission Project:**

Wataynikaneyap Power is a licensed transmission company equally owned by 22 First Nation communities (51%), in partnership with Fortis Inc. (49%). FortisOntario Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Fortis Inc., and an electricity transmission and distribution utility holding company based in Ontario, has a 49% interest in the general partner of Wataynikaneyap Power and owns 100% of Wataynikaneyap Power PM Inc., the project manager. Pikangikum First Nation is one of 22 First Nation partners. Wataynikaneyap will develop, own, and operate approximately 1,800 kilometers of 230 kV, 115 kV, and 44 kV power lines in northwestern Ontario (the “Project”) in order to connect remote First Nation communities to the provincial electricity grid. The communities are currently powered by diesel generation, which is financially unsustainable, environmentally risky, and inadequate to meet community needs.

22 First Nation communities working together and controlling the development of infrastructure within their traditional lands is monumental and will be a catalyst for greater prosperity and economic self-determination.

The Project is a massive undertaking and is one project with two phases. The first phase, a new 300 km 230 kV transmission line to Pickle Lake, will reinforce power supply in the area. The existing line is over 70 years old and at capacity and is prone to frequent, extended power outages. The second phase includes 1,500 km of 115 kV and 44 kV transmission lines to connect 17 remote First Nations communities north of Pickle Lake and Red Lake.

The Governments of Canada and Ontario approved funding for the Project in the aggregate amount of \$1.6 billion. The funding framework allows for a viable transmission business with First Nations and Fortis Inc. participating as the equity investors. Now that the funding framework has been approved, the next major milestone is the filing of the leave to construct application with the Ontario Energy Board. Upon receipt of regulatory approvals and permitting, Wataynikaneyap Power expects to start construction in 2019. The Government of Ontario has recognized Wataynikaneyap Power’s efforts by identifying the connection of remote First Nation communities as a provincial priority and designating the company to undertake the Project.

In addition to the significant savings associated with the avoided cost of diesel generation, the Project is estimated to create 769 jobs during construction and nearly \$900 million in socio-economic benefits. Socio-economic benefits include lower greenhouse gas emissions (more than 6.6 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent GHG emissions are estimated to be avoided), as well as improved health of community members, and ongoing benefits from increased economic growth.

FortisOntario Inc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Fortis Inc., and an electricity transmission and distribution utility holding company based in Ontario, acts as the project manager and has responsibility to develop, manage construction and operate the line. The goals of the Project include the connection of remote First Nations communities, capacity building and eventual 100% First Nations ownership and operation of line.

More information about Wataynikaneyap Power can be found at [www.wataypower.ca](http://www.wataypower.ca)