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April 28, 2021

Canadian Heritage Rivers System (CHRS) Board
Attention: Ashley Campbell, Director, Heritage Designations and Programs Branch Indigenous Affairs
and Cultural Heritage Directorate
Parks Canada Agency
3rd floor, 30 Victoria Street
Gatineau, QC J8X 0B3
Email: Ashley.campbell@canada.ca

Re: Nomination of the North Saskatchewan River in Alberta to the Canadian Heritage River System (CHRS)

I am pleased to provide this letter on behalf of EPCOR to express our support in nominating and designating the North Saskatchewan River (NSR) in Alberta to the Canadian Heritage River System (CHRS).

The North Saskatchewan River is the sole source of drinking water for over one million people in the Edmonton region. As well the river assimilates treated wastewater from EPCOR's Gold Bar wastewater treatment plant and the stormwater collection system. As the utility who both provides drinking water and manages discharges of storm and wastewater to the NSR, EPCOR is committed to ensuring that the water quality and aquatic ecosystems of the NSR are maintained or improved over time as the City grows.

EPCOR recognizes that collaborative watershed management combined with watershed science, will ensure the NSR will continue to support healthy aquatic ecosystems and maintain the current good water quality and supply that we have come to depend on. As such, EPCOR contributes financially and in-kind to the established Watershed Planning and Advisory Council, the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance (NSWA). EPCOR also sits on the NSWA's board and Headwaters Alliance group.

Understanding the importance of having a strong scientific foundation for decision making, EPCOR spearheaded the development of a tributary monitoring network for the North Saskatchewan River basin (the WaterSHED project) in 2018 which supports monitoring of 19 tributaries in the NSR watershed. This program was developed and carried out in partnership with the NSWA, City of Edmonton and Alberta Environment & Parks' Monitoring Evaluation and Science Division. To build on this monitoring work, EPCOR is currently leading the development of a ten year basin-wide modelling strategy and tool to look at future growth, climate change, and management scenarios as they effect water quality and quantity. EPCOR also funds University-based research projects to better understand groundwater contributions, climate change impacts and impacts of agricultural beneficial management practices on the NSR.

In the urban watershed, EPCOR has developed an Integrated Watershed Management Strategy to quantify and manage total loads to the NSR from the City of Edmonton's footprint. A highlight of this strategy is the implementation of Low Impact Development (LID) features across the City to reduce urban flooding and runoff to the NSR.

The North Saskatchewan River is integral to the histories of Indigenous people and settlers alike, and the Edmonton reach marks an important gathering place in both pre-contact and post-contact times. The North Saskatchewan River valley at Edmonton has been occupied for at least eight to ten thousand years.

EPCOR has funded archaeological investigations in the River Crossing (Rosssdale) area of Edmonton, and at our E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant in west Edmonton, which have added to the understanding of the significance of human occupation along the river.

At River Crossing/Rosssdale, EPCOR's utility services stand adjacent to and overlapping with the footprints of several earlier versions of Fort Edmonton (which occupied five locations on the North Saskatchewan River between 1795 and 1915). Several of our buildings there are provincially designated heritage buildings, as is our former power generating plant which was recently transferred to the City of Edmonton for future adaptive reuse.

Rosssdale was a burying ground for Indigenous people and others who lived at Fort Edmonton and in the surrounding area. When human remains were found on the site, a commitment was made to honour those buried there. Part of Rosssdale Road that crossed the burial ground was rerouted around it and the decision was made to build a memorial. The human remains were reburied at a special ceremony in August of 2006 and the site is now legally designated as a cemetery or burial ground. The memorial was designed with input from the City of Edmonton, EPCOR, descendants, stakeholders and community volunteers, including people of First Nations, French Canadian, Métis and European ancestry.

At our E.L. Smith Water Treatment Plant in west Edmonton, archeological investigations have identified seven campsite occupations that ranged between roughly 3,500 and 9,000 years before present. We will be promoting public understanding of this history through upcoming interpretive installations, and have entered into a partnership with Enoch Cree Nation to facilitate the reintroduction of ceremony and cultural practices to this area, which includes their former reserve lands. At both sites, we have protocols with 30 Indigenous Nations and representative groups that includes a process for their participation in monitoring ground disturbance activities.

As an organization that is closely connected to the North Saskatchewan River, and that has invested significantly in advancing management, research, monitoring, modelling, implementation and education for over 30 years, EPCOR welcomes and supports the designation of the NSR as a Canadian Heritage River. Specifically EPCOR supports the CHRS's building opportunities for cooperative river management that unites communities; the celebration and support of the cultural connections of Indigenous Peoples with rivers; the promotion of stewardship and citizen engagement; the engagement of new Canadians and youth in river education, conservation, and recreation; and the encouragement of the protection of water resources to improve public health, well-being and quality of life.

Yours truly,



Shawn Bradford
Senior Vice President Water Canada
EPCOR Utilities Inc.

cc. Martin Kennedy, Director, Public & Government Affairs