

**Abstract Submission for 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian River Heritage Conference**

Title of Presentation:

THE RED RIVER FLOODWAY EXPANSION PROJECT:  
BUILDING CAPACITY FOR TOMORROW

Category: River Management

Presenter:

Ernie Gilroy, CEO  
Manitoba Floodway Authority

Contact Person:

Ronuk Modha  
Manitoba Floodway Authority  
200-155 Carlton Street  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 3H8  
Tel. 945-4900  
Fax. 948-2462  
Email: [ronuk.modha@gov.mb.ca](mailto:ronuk.modha@gov.mb.ca)

## Abstract

On September 23, 2005, construction of the Red River Floodway Expansion Project was officially kicked off by Manitoba Premier Gary Doer and former Premier Duff Roblin at a historic groundbreaking ceremony along the floodway near Grande Pointe, Manitoba.

The expansion project builds on the enormous success of the original floodway which was built as a response to the disastrous 1950 flood that submerged much of Winnipeg. Under the guidance of then Premier Duff Roblin, the original floodway was built between 1963 and 1968 at a cost of \$63 million. At the time, Roblin was roundly criticized for moving forward with the floodway project. Over the years, however, “Duff’s Ditch” has proved its worth. The floodway has been operated over 20 times, preventing over \$10 billion in flood damages to the provincial economy.

The floodway expansion project is one of the largest public infrastructure projects in Manitoba’s history. The project increases Winnipeg’s flood protection from 1-in-90 year to 1-in-700 year and involves the excavation of 21 million cubic metres of earth, the re-construction of 6 highway and rail bridges (including the national transportation routes for the Trans-Canada Highway and the CPR and CNR Main lines), improvements to the inlet control structure, construction of a redesigned floodway outlet, modifications to water, gas, hydro and other utilities and raising and extending the West Dike.

To date, the floodway expansion project is moving along on schedule. As a result of the work undertaken, the level of flood protection has already been increased to 1-in-140. By spring 2007, it is anticipated that construction progress will result in a 1-in-300 year level of flood protection – equivalent to the largest flood in Manitoba history.

Work on nine major components has been undertaken:

- 1) Excavation of the Floodway Embankment Gap east of Grande Pointe;
- 2) Excavation of 31 km, or approximately 64 per cent of the Floodway Channel from the Inlet to the just south of the PTH 59 North Bridge;
- 3) Completion of the replacement and upgrade of the Trans-Canada #1 Highway Bridge;
- 4) Replacement and upgrade of the PTH 59 South Bridge;
- 5) Replacement of the CN Sprague Railway Bridge;
- 6) Replacement of the CN Redditt Railway Bridge;
- 7) Relocation of the City of Winnipeg Aqueduct;
- 8) Flood protection improvements to the West Dike; and
- 9) Various utility modifications along the floodway channel.

Currently approximately 200 people and over 50 companies are working on the project.

As the project proceeds, enhancements related to recreation, economic development, and Aboriginal employment are being pursued.

The floodway expansion project is scheduled to be completed in 2010.

Biographical sketch:

In April, 2003, Mr. Ernie Gilroy was appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of the Manitoba Floodway Authority, a crown corporation established to oversee and manage the \$665 million Red River Floodway Expansion Project. In this role, Mr. Gilroy was responsible obtaining environmental approvals as well as managing the design and construction of the project.

Mr. Gilroy brings with him significant experience from the insurance industry and was president of a family-run insurance business. Mr. Gilroy has also been active in the public sector. In 1986, Mr. Gilroy was elected as a City Councilor for the City of Winnipeg and in 1998, he became the Manager for the Executive Policy Secretariat for Mayor Glen Murray. In this capacity, Mr. Gilroy worked on a number of files including film and culture, intergovernmental affairs, economic development, French Language services, and Aboriginal Affairs.

Mr. Gilroy grew up in Portage La Prairie, Manitoba and currently lives in the West end of Winnipeg with his wife Wendy.