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## Hydro 'holding off' on plans for Exchange District buildings

By: Staff Writer

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At far left is the existing Manitoba Hydro substation on King Street, which officials said the utility wants to expand into buildings to the right on McDermot Avenue. (WAYNE GLOWACKI / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS )

Manitoba Hydro will make no moves to purchase and gut three historic buildings in the Exchange District until it consults with concerned citizens and business groups, utility president Bob Brennan said Thursday.

Brennan said he was aware that the utility had been exploring options to expand its existing substation of King Street, but he told the *Free Press* he was unaware that those plans included buying three adjacent buildings and gutting them to accommodate the installation of electrical transmission equipment.

"We're holding off," Brennan said this afternoon.

Hydro officials said increased demand for electricity throughout the downtown area is forcing the utility to expand its King Street substation.

The *Free Press* reported today that Hydro has entered talks with the Edmonton-based property investment firm that owns three century-old adjacent buildings on McDermot Avenue. The three buildings -- the Wilson building (288 McDermot), the Glengarry building (290 McDermot) and the Daylight building (296 McDermot) -- are on the city's historical buildings conservation list.

The buildings would either be demolished or the facades maintained and the interiors

completely gutted — including all interior floors — to accommodate the electrical equipment, officials said.

The plan has drawn harsh criticism from heritage building advocates, a local residents group and business groups, who said the proposal will destroy the area's unique historic nature and be an impediment to growth.

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