

CUSTOMER STORY | ENERGY

Manitoba Hydro Cuts Costs, Seamlessly Transitions Energy Customers to New Authentication Platform with F5 + WBM



Manitoba Hydro generates and distributes natural gas and hydroelectric power to more than half a million households and businesses in Manitoba, Canada. These customers rely on the local energy provider’s online applications to securely view gas and electric bills, access personal information, manage energy accounts for rental properties, and even apply for permits.

PRODUCTS

[BIG-IP Access Manager >](#)

[BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager >](#)

Although these online applications provide the convenience customers require, the authentication platform no longer met their needs. To reduce operating costs, consolidate their application environment, and streamline the implementation of future applications, Manitoba Hydro leveraged F5’s established partnership with WBM to devise a better solution.

BENEFITS

Produces significant cost-savings and efficiencies

Accomplishes major upgrade with no interruption

Positions company for continued growth

Manitoba Hydro had previously implemented several F5 modules, including Access Policy Manager (APM) and Local Traffic Manager (LTM), so WBM integrated the existing application environment into F5’s robust and secure authentication platform. Not only did the F5 solution create a cost-effective and scalable infrastructure, it provided WBM with the flexibility to seamlessly transfer several of Manitoba Hydro’s applications to the new platform —without disrupting service to customers.

[Manitoba Hydro](#), a Canadian energy provider, had outgrown the authentication platform its customers used to access some of its online applications. F5 partner WBM expanded the utility’s existing F5 security solutions to help the organization seamlessly transition to a more cost-effective and sustainable platform.

CHALLENGES

Cut costs

Ensure no interruptions to service

Streamline application access

Business Challenges

Manitoba Hydro, a hydroelectric and natural gas energy producer and distributor, traces its history back more than a century to when electricity was still considered a novelty. Today, Manitoba Hydro operates 15 hydroelectric facilities and two thermal generating stations throughout Manitoba. It distributes electricity to more than 580,000 customers across the province and natural gas to 282,000 customers in southern Manitoba. However, as Manitoba Hydro expanded and merged with other companies over the years, it outgrew some of its previous solutions.

access personal information, apply for permits, manage the gas and electrical accounts of rental properties, and more. To authenticate its customers and provide secure access to applications, Manitoba Hydro relied on a platform from a third-party vendor. This solution was expensive and lacked the standardization Manitoba Hydro needed.

“At our stage of growth, our prior solution had become too costly. Our goal was to standardize our application platform and cut costs to become more efficient,” said a Manitoba Hydro team member.

Manitoba Hydro wanted a flexible, cost-effective platform that could securely authenticate customers and give them single sign-on access to multiple online services. The company needed to implement this new solution in a way that would allow continuous customer usage without interruptions or changes to their current service.

“We are committed to providing our customers with the best possible experience. This means offering them excellent service and ensuring our online platform remains efficient, secure, and up to date.” – Manitoba Hydro team member

Solution

Manitoba Hydro was already using several F5 modules, including the [BIG-IP Access Manager](#) and [BIG-IP Local Traffic Manager](#) (LTM). It made sense to extend those solutions to meet the authentication needs for some of the company’s in-house applications. With the capability to authenticate users against an existing directory and provide authorization, access, and auditing, BIG-IP APM was a good candidate for managing user access to Manitoba Hydro’s application environment.

Manitoba Hydro brought on trusted F5 partner [WBM](#) to implement this new solution. WBM integrated F5’s BIG-IP APM module with the WebLogic platform hosting Manitoba Hydro’s enterprise applications by using [Security Assertion Markup Language](#) (SAML), a standardized authentication protocol. This allowed it to configure BIG-IP APM as a SAML identity provider, with Manitoba Hydro’s business applications acting as SAML service providers, streamlining management of every application (and future applications) under the F5 BIG-IP APM module.

“Because of F5’s standardized use of the SAML 2.0 protocol,” said an IT security team member, “it was easy to complete the SAML integration between F5 and Manitoba Hydro’s back-end business applications.”

As a result of this configuration, Manitoba Hydro’s customers could be authenticated against a [Lightweight Directory Access Protocol](#) directory and given secure single sign-on access to any enterprise application. To maintain a seamless experience, custom iRules were established to accommodate data manipulation, workflow behavior, and use cases.

“At Manitoba Hydro, we are committed to providing our customers with the best possible experience,” said a team member. “This means offering them excellent service and ensuring our online platform remains efficient, secure, and up to date.”

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Benefits

By integrating its WebLogic application platform with F5’s BIG-IP Access Policy Manager, Manitoba Hydro eliminated its previous authentication service and saved a significant amount of money. With a seamless implementation, F5’s solution allows the company to continue building out cost-effective tools and services for customers.

Cuts operating costs and increases operational efficiencies

By leveraging already-active F5 products to replace an older authentication platform, Manitoba Hydro realized significant cost savings with long-term benefits. It also allowed the company to consolidate some of its IT infrastructure, freeing up employees to take care of customers.

Seamless upgrade without service interruptions

Manitoba Hydro seamlessly implemented the major upgrade to its authentication platform without any service interruptions for its customer base, helping the organization maintain its reputation as a reliable and consistent utility provider. Customers could log into Manitoba’s online applications just as they had before.

Builds in flexibility for future growth

By consolidating its technology and using a standardized model, F5’s solution uses an established, platform-independent infrastructure that gives Manitoba Hydro a flexible option for expanding online services to customers.

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