

Coalition to Save Lake Winnipeg

Intergovernmental challenges result in another delay



Photo by Lynnette Froese

VISION

A HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE LAKE WINNIPEG THAT CONTRIBUTES TO THE SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC WELL-BEING OF ALL.

TO ACT AS AN ADVOCATE INFORMING STAKEHOLDERS AND COORDINATING EFFORTS TO SAVE, PROTECT AND MAINTAIN POSITIVE, SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES FOR LAKE WINNIPEG.

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[Manitoba Cottage Owners Association](#)

March, 2021

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Thank you to all of the Concerned Citizens who took the time to contact their elected officials following the CSLW's Call to Action on February 18, 2021. Engagement with elected officials by many voices increases the awareness of the importance of Lake Winnipeg's health from their constituents. It is expected that the individuals we elect work together on important goals and action for positive change for the lake.

On Thursday, March 25th Winnipeg City Council voted to pause the investment in the Biosolids Facility, indicating the lack of commitment for infrastructure funding from the Federal Government due to a delay in Provincial government request process. Please view the discussion at the following link [City Council Meeting March 25 at 6:00](#).

The following publication was noted in the Winnipeg Free Press:

" Winnipeg will delay spending \$15.3 million on a detailed engineering design for part of the \$1.8 billion north end sewage treatment plant upgrade.

Council voted to pause the investment in the project's biosolid facility Thursday, since a funding request to the provincial and federal governments for the overall upgrade has not yet been granted.

City water and waste officials warn that proceeding with the project before a funding commitment arrives could lead the city to waste its money on design." Saturday, March 27th 2021, B3.

Intergovernmental challenges delay important action again

Today the Coalition to Save Lake Winnipeg has sent a letter (see below) to all City of Winnipeg Councillors, All Members of the Provincial Legislature and All Members of Parliament representing Manitoba. We have included the Federal Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Honorable Catherine McKenna, Federal Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Honorable Jonathan Wilkinson and Prime Minister Trudeau.

Invitation to Concerned Citizens

We invite our community of concerned citizens to join in our efforts to ask individual Municipal, Provincial and Federal representatives for your area to work together. As individuals, we are the ones who support these levels of government through our tax dollars. The Province of Manitoba and the Federal Government will be presenting their Budgets in early April, 2021. Will their financial support for Lake Winnipeg be presented? The 2003 Call to Actions from the Manitoba Government clearly states how essential intergovernmental cooperation and collaboration is for the health of Lake Winnipeg. (see below) Please feel free to use the information from our letter.

Please also feel free to share the letter with others. Links to the information can be found at [Maco](#). You are welcome to copy your letter to cslakewinnipeg@gmail.com

Letter from the Coalition to Save Lake Winnipeg (references included)

March 29, 2021

Dear Elected Officials for the City of Winnipeg, Province of Manitoba and Federal Representatives from Manitoba,

The Coalition to Save Lake Winnipeg has actively engaged with elected officials to understand the commitment to action, strategies for implementation and projected timelines for important steps toward the healing of Lake Winnipeg. The CSLW has appreciated the elected officials' responses in writing or through conversation. It is apparent that there is greater understanding amongst all elected officials that Lake Winnipeg's health has been severely compromised. There is consensus that phosphorus loading into the waterways that lead to Lake Winnipeg is the primary contributing factor for the dangerous increase in eutrophication. The impact of Municipal, Provincial and Federal government coordinated action regarding science-based solutions for the health of Lake Winnipeg has the potential to increase the likelihood of positive outcomes for Lake Winnipeg.

While we applaud this recognition, we continue to see delayed timelines, barriers for accessing funding, lack of enforcement for noncompliance of 0.1mg/l phosphorus emissions, permits for development that negatively impact the capacity of already failing infrastructure and intergovernmental finger pointing. Justifying inaction because of complex intergovernmental relationships is no longer acceptable. Municipal, Provincial and Federal governments are all stakeholders in the health of Lake Winnipeg. Cooperative collaboration of all levels of governments is expected to address the immediate steps needed for the health of the lake.

Over 50 years ago the Experimental Lake Area (ELA), now the International Institute of Sustainable Development (IISD), was established to research the impact of nutrient loading on freshwaters and the subsequent eutrophication that destroys the ecosystem. In 1974, David Schindler, Scientist at ELA, published "Eutrophication and Recovery in Experimental Lakes: Implications for Lake Management" which emphasized the need to control phosphorus levels in waterways. [David Schindler](#)

In 2003, following the 2002 unprecedented large raw sewage spill from the NEWPCC, public hearings were held with all stakeholders with comprehensive recommendations. These recommendations included:

- "Manitoba Conservation should accelerate the schedule to complete the Nutrient Management Strategy for Southern Manitoba by December 2004.
- The City of Winnipeg should be directed to plan for the removal of nitrogen and phosphorus from its municipal wastewaters, and to take immediate steps in support of the nutrient reduction targets established for Lake Winnipeg. The City's nutrient removal plan should be a key element of a licence review hearing to be scheduled within two years.
- The City of Winnipeg should be directed to shorten the timeframe to complete its combined sewer overflow plan from the proposed 50 years to a 20 to 25- year period
- The City of Winnipeg should be directed to take immediate action to reduce combined sewer overflows by instrumenting outfalls, adjusting weirs, accelerating combined sewer replacement, advancing the pilot retention project and undertaking other reasonable measures to reduce combined sewer overflows within two years.
- The City of Winnipeg should be directly assisted by the Province of Manitoba in efforts to secure financial support under existing and future infrastructure programs for upgrades to its wastewater collection and treatment systems.
- The provincial and federal governments must both come to the table with funds to help the City meet its responsibilities." [Call to Action All Levels of Government 2003](#)

In 2011, the Province of Manitoba and Government of Canada published the document “State of the Lake” which extensively reviewed the time period 1999-2007 and the critical elements impacting the deterioration of Lake Winnipeg. This document concluded with:

“In September of 2010, Environment Canada and Manitoba Water Stewardship signed a Memorandum of Understanding Respecting Lake Winnipeg and its Basin. The Memorandum provides a framework for:

- Identification of joint priorities for coordinated scientific activities;
- Coordination of information sharing between federal and provincial programs and activities;
- Providing a forum for communication, consensus building and coordination of activities.

The Memorandum of Understanding will help to guide future research and monitoring on Lake Winnipeg and its large watershed and will also help to identify and implement the solutions required to reduce nutrient loading and halt eutrophication” [State of the Lake 2011](#)

The Coalition to Save Lake Winnipeg is urging all levels of government to move beyond their sole jurisdictional perspective and collaborate without bias to Save Lake Winnipeg. All waterways will benefit from coordinated government action to limit phosphorus emission from all sources. Coordinated leadership is needed for focused commitment to Lake Winnipeg’s survival, without restraint.

The CSLW is committed to the final words from the Commission report in 2003:

“The public also has an important role to play in improving water quality in Manitoba. Citizens must become informed about water quality issues that affect them, participate in water quality initiatives such as Manitoba’s nutrient management strategy and hold their elected officials accountable for the implementation of sustainable water policies.

With governments working together, and our citizens engaged, Manitoba’s precious waterways will benefit from “better treatment” for generations to come.”

As Concerned Citizens, we are calling on all levels of government to follow through on recommendations that have already been made and not delay action indefinitely.

Coalition to Save Lake Winnipeg