

June 6, 2024

Coalition to Save Lake Winnipeg
cslakewinnipeg@gmail.com

Dear Coalition to Save Lake Winnipeg:

Thank you for your email of May 10, 2024, to Honourable Tracy Schmidt, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, regarding the recent sewage leak and the City of Winnipeg's management of this issue. As Acting Director of the Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Branch, I am pleased to respond on the Minister's behalf.

The department is actively investigating the situation and has conducted monitoring to aid in assessing the environmental impacts. Manitoba has a strong regulatory and licensing framework in place to address water pollution from wastewater facilities, but there are clearly opportunities to strengthen our enforcement framework. Proposed amendments to The Environment Act would provide additional tools for compliance and enforcement. The province is also taking steps to ensure incidents are reported to potentially impacted communities.

The province is committed to assist the City of Winnipeg with funding essential upgrades to their wastewater system. One of these commitments is a \$10 million provincial investment to support the City of Winnipeg's \$20 million project to replace the sewer pipes crossing the Red River near the Fort Garry Bridge; a project with a total estimated cost of \$20 million, with Winnipeg covering the balance of the costs.

In addition, Manitoba has committed a total of \$264.1 million for the North End Water Pollution Centre (NEWPCC) Upgrades;

- Phase 1 Headworks Facilities, which involves the construction of a new power plant and upgrades to the headworks, where untreated sewage and storm water enters the plant; and
- Phase 2 Biosolids Facilities, which involves the construction of a facility to process biosolids, the nutrient-rich, sludge-like by-product of initial wastewater treatment at all three Winnipeg sewage plants.

Phase 3 Biological Nutrient Removal is a facility that will remove phosphorus and nitrogen, two nutrients that promote the growth of algae in Lake Winnipeg, from treated wastewater before effluent from the plant discharges into the Red River. The City has not submitted a funding request for this phase yet.

The City is aiming to complete all three phases of the NEWPCC Upgrades and meet provincial requirements by 2030.

Nutrients enter Lake Winnipeg from a vast number of smaller sources across the one million square kilometer watershed. About half of the nutrients originate from within Manitoba, with the remaining nutrients being contributed from Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, North Dakota, Minnesota, and small areas of South Dakota and Montana. We believe it is important to continue to monitor the ecosystem health and water quality of these watersheds and across Lake Winnipeg.

The province's Water Management Strategy includes a strong focus on water quality, including for Lake Winnipeg. Under this strategy, Manitoba will continue to work closely with neighboring jurisdictions to reduce nutrients and improve water quality. Information on the actions the province is taking to reduce nutrients, as well as information on the annual monitoring of water quality on Lake Winnipeg, is available at <https://www.manitoba.ca/sd/water/lakes-beaches-rivers/index.html>.

If you have any additional questions or would like to discuss this matter further, please contact me at Yvonne.Hawryliuk@gov.mb.ca or 204-801-3016.

Sincerely,



Yvonne Hawryliuk
Acting Director

c. Honourable Tracy Schmidt