



LAKE
WINNIPEG
FOUNDATION

Federal budget fails Lake Winnipeg

News

LWF

April 8, 2022

0



Fresh water in Canada was promised \$100 million/year for 10 years in the [Liberal Party election platform](#).

A little over six months later, the federal budget delivered [only \\$19.6 million for a single year](#).

Just last month, [we released a federal report card on Lake Winnipeg](#). In our review of the past year's progress, we assigned a B grade in anticipation of the promised renewal of the Lake Winnipeg Basin Program in Budget 2022, as part of a larger federal Freshwater Action Plan.

That grade has been swiftly downgraded to an F with yesterday's federal budget release. Not only is the funding amount shockingly lower than the government's election commitment, it comes with the ominous warning that "the future of this initiative will be communicated at a later date."

We're stunned.

What happened to the "[historic investment](#)" that the Prime Minister directed Environment and Climate Change Minister Steven Guilbeault to deliver in his December 2021 mandate letter?

[Back in 2020](#), we warned that "the potential formation of a new federal water agency must not delay necessary actions that may be taken now." Yet this is exactly what has happened: over the past two years, consultation on a new Canada Water Agency has redirected department time and resources away from established freshwater priorities. Now, Budget 2022 allocates \$43.5 million over five years to the creation of the new agency - delaying and defunding long-standing regional water initiatives like the Lake Winnipeg Basin Program.

Unfortunately, we have yet to see a clear and compelling articulation of what the Canada Water Agency will achieve. Is it meant to replace all existing federal water programming? Is the federal government really phasing out regional water-protection initiatives across the country? How will a centralized national agency effectively address the complex and varied freshwater challenges faced by the diverse regions of Canada?

Improving the health of Lake Winnipeg - and myriad other regional waterbodies - certainly requires collaboration, commitment and ingenuity. Finding agreement between competing interests is hard work. Effective solutions require continuous evaluation and adaptation. Turning policy into practice is never a simple task.

From 2008 to 2022, the Lake Winnipeg Basin Program invested in regionally focused research and collaborative phosphorus-reduction initiatives - and was continuously refined by feedback from local stakeholders and government staff. A new national agency risks undermining these watershed-level efforts, pulling focus from urgent local needs and opportunities.

And a new agency provides no guarantee that the challenges of effective water management will be any easier. Without clear objectives and deliverables - after two years of discussion - the Canada Water Agency is highly unlikely to achieve the urgent phosphorus reduction needed to protect Lake Winnipeg's health from further deterioration.

Over a century of water challenges in this country will not be resolved by building new bureaucratic systems. Our government cannot afford to start over - Lake Winnipeg requires its full and committed follow-through.

How you can help:

Join us in advocating for federal investment in Lake Winnipeg. Send an email to [Environment and Climate Change Canada Minister Steven Guilbeault](#). Include [Terry Duguid, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change](#), in your communication.

Express your disappointment in Budget 2022 and ask for the renewal of the Lake Winnipeg Basin Program.

Here is an example of an effective message:

"Dear Minister Guilbeault,

I am reaching out to let you know how disappointed I am to see a reduction in funding for Lake Winnipeg in Budget 2022.

From 2008 to 2022, the Lake Winnipeg Basin Program invested in regionally focused research and collaborative phosphorus-reduction initiatives. This program has been a critically important part of the solution for Lake Winnipeg.

By failing to renew this program in Budget 2022, your government is risking progress made over the past 15 years to address the eutrophication of Lake Winnipeg.

Your government's 2021 election platform promised \$1 billion over 10 years to protect and restore Canada's lakes and rivers. The mandate letter you received from the Prime Minister in December directed to you to follow through on this commitment by securing "a historic investment... to protect and restore large lakes and river systems."

Instead, Budget 2022 allocated only \$19.6 million to the Freshwater Action Plan – and for only a single year.

To remedy this shortfall, I strongly urge you to:

- **Earmark a minimum of \$7.1 million in 2022-23 to Lake Winnipeg**, to support evidence-based phosphorus reduction and Indigenous engagement. Anything less amounts to a funding cut from previous federal investment in Lake Winnipeg initiatives.
- Follow through on the direction you have been given and commit to the \$1 billion, 10-year Freshwater Action Plan in **Budget 2023**.

Lake Winnipeg is Canada's Great Lake of the West. Please fulfil your mandate to protect it.

I would appreciate a reply to this email.

Sincerely,

Your name"

Remember to be clear and concise with your message, and customize your comment as much as possible; if you have a personal connection to Lake Winnipeg or have experienced algal blooms firsthand, make to mention it!

There is no stronger force in politics that the force of public opinion. Lake Winnipeg needs your help! Use your voice to secure funding for our great lake's protection.

Tags:

[2022](#)

[Lake Winnipeg](#)

[LWF](#)

[advocacy](#)

[Federal government](#)

[Federal Budget](#)

[Phosphorus](#)