



LAKE
WINNIPEG
FOUNDATION

Manitoba parties and candidates respond to Lake Winnipeg questions

News
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Fresh water matters to us, and we know it matters to our members and supporters.

In the lead-up to Manitoba's election, we wanted to learn more about how parties and candidates plan to address the challenges facing Lake Winnipeg.

We sent the following five questions to each party's headquarters. We also reached out to all Manitoba candidates with an accessible email address.

Question 1

Whole-lake studies on Lake 227 at Canada's Experimental Lakes Area (ELA) over multiple decades demonstrate that phosphorus controls the growth of blue-green algae blooms. This research has driven important policy changes that have greatly improved Great Lakes water quality. This same research points to the need to maximize phosphorus removal from the City of Winnipeg's sewage.

Manitoba's Clean Environment Commission, the Province of Manitoba, the City of Winnipeg, and freshwater scientists from around the world agree that removal of phosphorus from Winnipeg treatment plant effluent is imperative to reduce algae growth on Lake Winnipeg. However, action to achieve this has been stalled for over a decade. In December 2015, Winnipeg's North End plant released effluent with almost four and a half times the recommended phosphorus.

How will you and your party resolve the longstanding stalemate that continues to prevent action to remove phosphorus from Winnipeg's wastewater? How will you ensure immediate action is taken ensure phosphorus in Winnipeg's effluent does not exceed 1 milligram/litre?

Question 2

The eutrophication of Lake Winnipeg is a significant environmental threat caused by human activities occurring across a watershed that is 40 times larger than the lake itself. Improving, protecting and managing the health of Lake Winnipeg for long-term sustainability require financial investments commensurate with the scale and complexity of the challenge.

To protect Lake Winnipeg, Manitoba's department of conservation and water stewardship (MCWS) is responsible for water quality management, water monitoring programs, regulation of Manitoba's fisheries, and zebra mussel containment initiatives.

Over the past five years, MCWS's budget has been repeatedly cut - a troubling trend given that the health of Lake Winnipeg continues to decline while the cost of effective, sustainable solutions continues to rise.

Will you and your party commit to increasing MCWS's budget to rebuild the department's core capacity to monitor and manage Manitoba's valuable freshwater resources? To which other MCWS programs would you direct further investment?

Question 3

Wetlands keep our water clean by filtering out excess phosphorus. Bill 5, the *Surface Water Management Act (Amendments to various acts to protect lakes and wetlands)*, died on the order paper in the last legislative session. This bill was the result of four years of public consultation, had the support of both conservation and agricultural communities, and would have been an important first step in protecting Manitoba's threatened wetlands.

The introduction of a new and strengthened *Surface Water Management Act* must be an immediate priority for Manitoba's new government. A revised bill should be based on the premise of no net loss of wetland benefits and put in place a drainage moratorium on seasonal (class 3) wetlands – equivalent to the protection granted to permanent and semi-permanent wetlands (classes 5 and 4).

Will you and your party commit to rapidly re-introducing a comprehensive bill enabling strong regulatory protection of Manitoba's threatened wetlands?

Question 4

Phosphorus inputs to Lake Winnipeg are driven by the amount of water flowing across the lake's vast watershed. Monitoring where, when and how phosphorus is entering our waterways is vital to improving the health of the lake.

The most recent publicly available data on phosphorus levels in Lake Winnipeg and its tributaries are from 2007. Since then, Manitoba has experienced two of the worst flooding events in its history.

To make smart water-management decisions, Manitoba needs a collaborative water-quality monitoring program that measures the impact of high-water events such as spring melts, floods and storms, and that draws on expertise throughout the province. Data must be made public so that all Manitobans know what's happening, and what remains to be done.

How will you and your party develop and fund a collaborative, events-based monitoring program? Will you also commit to regular annual public reporting of collected data?

Question 5

Recent media portrayals have led to widespread public perception that Lake Winnipeg cannot recover. Inconsistency in the way solutions are presented has left citizens concerned about what's been accomplished, what's left to do and who's responsible. Independent oversight is necessary to ensure our actions are adding up to real impact.

Though multiple collaborative initiatives and reports have generated hundreds of recommendations over the last decade, no mechanism exists to ensure these recommendations are being followed, or to evaluate the cumulative effectiveness of current efforts.

Establishing an Office of the Environmental Commissioner – as has been done federally and in Ontario – would create a means through which Manitoba's existing programs could be reviewed and aligned, and compliance could be enforced.

Do you and your party support the establishment of an independent Office of the Environmental Commissioner of Manitoba?

WHERE DO OUR FUTURE PROVINCIAL LEADERS STAND ON LAKE WINNIPEG?

To help you make an informed decision on April 19, we're now sharing what we learned.

Party responses:

Click on a party name (listed below) to read the response we received.

[Green Party of Manitoba](#)

[Manitoba Liberal Party](#)

[New Democratic Party of Manitoba](#)

[The Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba](#)

Candidate responses:

Some individual candidates also chose to respond to our questionnaire. Below, we've listed the names of those who replied, along with the constituency in which they are running and the party they are representing; click on a name to read that candidate's response.

Arthur-Virden

[Frank Godon, Manitoba Party](#)

Dauphin

[Darrell Inkster, Manitoba Party](#)

[Kate Storey, Green Party](#)

Elmwood

[Albert Ratt, Manitoba Party](#)

Fort Garry-Riverview

[James Beddome, Green Party](#)

Fort Rouge

[Grant Sharp, Green Party](#)

Kirkfield Park

[Lisa Omand, Green Party](#)

Minto

[Martha Jo Willard, Green Party](#)

[Don Woodstock, Independent](#)

Morden-Winkler

[Mike Urichuk, Green Party](#)

Radisson

[Scott Newman, Liberal Party](#)

River Heights

[Michael Cardillo, Green Party](#)

St. Boniface

[Signe Knutson, Green Party](#)

[Alain Landry, Liberal Party](#)

St. James

[Brad Gross, Manitoba Party](#)

Swan River

[Dan Soprovich, Green Party](#)

The Maples

[John Redekopp, Green Party](#)

Wolseley

[Wayne Sturby, Manitoba Party](#)

NO RESPONSE FROM YOUR CANDIDATE?

We encourage you to contact the candidates in your constituency. Go to Elections Manitoba's [website](#) to find out who's running in your area. (Citizen-created site [Manitoba Election 2016](#) is also a great resource.) A streamlined, downloadable/printable version of our five Lake Winnipeg questions can be found [here](#).

Let's make the health of our lake an election issue – and a priority of Manitoba's next government.

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