



Manitoba parties respond to Lake Winnipeg questions

News

LWF

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In the lead-up to Manitoba's election on Sept. 10, we wanted to learn more about how each party plans to address the challenges facing Lake Winnipeg.

We sent the following three questions to each of the four main party's provincial headquarters:

1. Improving sewage treatment in Winnipeg

Winnipeg's North End Water Pollution Control Centre (NEWPCC) is the single largest point source of phosphorus to Lake Winnipeg, releasing an average of 600 kilograms of phosphorus every day. This is more than three times the phosphorus limit prescribed in the plant's provincial operating licence – yet the city's current construction plan continues to delay phosphorus removal until 2035.

Manitoba Sustainable Development's Environmental Approvals Branch recently asked the City of Winnipeg to provide an updated timeline for NEWPCC upgrades, as well as "interim implementation options to expedite phosphorus removal in advance of full biological nutrient removal."

The Lake Winnipeg Foundation has proposed a cost-effective, technically feasible interim retrofit to reduce the plant's phosphorus release by 70 per cent. This retrofit involves a simple adjustment to the timing and dose of ferric chloride, a chemical already in use at the NEWPCC. On July 31, city officials dismissed LWF's proposal and have not provided a timeline for regulatory compliance.

As provincial regulator, how will you ensure the City of Winnipeg takes immediate action to address the NEWPCC's impact on Lake Winnipeg? What consequences will you impose for non-compliance?

2. Protecting Manitoba's wetlands

Wetlands play a vital role in protecting Lake Winnipeg's water quality, filtering phosphorus out of runoff before it reaches the streams and rivers that ultimately drain into the lake. Yet Manitoba's wetlands continue to be drained and destroyed at a rate of 3.6 hectares a day.

Manitoba's Sustainable Watersheds Act legislates the guiding principle of "no net loss of wetland benefits." If achieved in practice, this principle represents an important first step in stopping Lake Winnipeg water quality from getting worse. It is only once we have protected our remaining wetlands that we can begin to make water-quality improvements through remedial action.

In November 2018, Manitoba Sustainable Development launched a public consultation on a proposed Water Rights Regulation. Over 250 submissions were received. Many of these submissions expressed concern that the proposed regulation was not consistent with "no net loss of wetland benefits," as it erodes existing wetland protections and does not adequately compensate for ongoing drainage.

Will you commit to amending regulation to prohibit drainage of threatened wetlands? How will you fund effective enforcement in order to protect wetlands?

3. Protecting Lake Winnipeg's economic value

Lake Winnipeg is important to Manitoba's economy. The lake's fisheries are worth \$130 million, while tourism and recreation contribute \$110 million annually to the provincial economy.

Lake Winnipeg property values also make significant economic contributions. Properties around the lake's south basin alone are worth \$2.5 billion and collectively generate approximately \$40 million in annual tax revenues, supporting vibrant businesses and communities on the lake's shores. Dozens of communities, including First Nations and Metis, depend on Lake Winnipeg for clean drinking water, sustainable livelihoods and viable subsistence fisheries.

Inaction not only puts these economic assets at risk – it could be very costly for all Manitobans: a recent study estimates uncontrolled algae blooms on Lake Erie will cost over \$5 billion in the next 30 years, with the largest costs falling to the tourism industry and property owners.

How will your government protect Manitobans' businesses and property investments on Lake Winnipeg?

Where do our provincial parties stand on Lake Winnipeg?

To help you make an informed decision on Sept. 10, we're now sharing what we learned.

- The Green Party of Manitoba sent us [this response](#).
- The Manitoba Liberal Party sent us a link to [its plan for Lake Winnipeg](#).
- The New Democratic Party of Manitoba sent us [this response](#).
- The Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba did not send us a response.

Help us keep momentum going

Contact your provincial candidates in your area. Tell them Lake Winnipeg matters to you. (Not sure who's running in your area? More information is available on Elections Manitoba's [website](#).) A printable version of our three questions can be found [here](#).

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

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