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## Opportunity for action: prioritizing Winnipeg sewage treatment

News

LWF

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Winnipeg's aging wastewater infrastructure is putting Lake Winnipeg at risk - which means civic leaders have a responsibility to take action.

Excessive amounts of phosphorus flowing into Lake Winnipeg from a variety of sources are causing potentially toxic algae blooms. Undertreated city sewage is one of these sources. Toilet water ultimately becomes lake water - all that stands between the two is our wastewater treatment system.

Winnipeg's North End Water Pollution Control Centre (NEWPCC) treats approximately 70 per cent of the city's wastewater. The NEWPCC is currently the fourth largest phosphorus polluter among all wastewater treatment facilities in Canada, and the single-largest point source of phosphorus flowing into Lake Winnipeg.

**Online [compliance reports](#) show phosphorus concentration in NEWPCC effluent routinely exceeds the provincial licence limit - at times reported to be over five times higher.**

The City of Winnipeg has committed to fully upgrading the NEWPCC. Experts estimate this upgrade will take 10 years or more to complete and cost an estimated \$1.4 billion. Under its provincial operating licence, the city must reduce phosphorus in NEWPCC effluent to 1 milligram per litre (based on a 30-day rolling average) by Dec. 31, 2019.

Jurisdictions around Lake Erie are currently meeting the 1 mg/L phosphorus limit using a simple, cost-effective chemical addition to their wastewater treatment processes. In fact, some jurisdictions are now challenging themselves to meet new goals of 0.5 mg/L or less!

An interim retrofit to the NEWPCC modelled on methods used in Ontario could be applied quickly at low cost - protecting our water until permanent upgrades can be completed.

Reducing phosphorus loading from Winnipeg wastewater will help protect Lake Winnipeg. Civic leaders must act NOW to meet the Dec. 31, 2019, phosphorus deadline.

### Take action: how you can help

Winnipeg's election is on Oct. 24. Contact your civic candidates and speak up for water. Ask them if they support IMMEDIATE ACTION to improve sewage treatment.

Go to the City of Winnipeg [Election 2018 website](#) to find out who's running in your area. (Citizen-created site [Winnipeg Election 2018](#) is also a great

resource.)

A downloadable/printable version of this call for action can be found [here](#) - print one off to engage with candidates who knock on your door.

Let's make the health of our lake a civic election issue - and a priority of Winnipeg's next government.

*Want to learn more about Winnipeg's wastewater woes? Read our [Sewage S.O.S. report](#), originally published in the Winnipeg Free Press this spring.*

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