



LAKE
WINNIPEG
FOUNDATION

3. Setting the Standard for Wastewater Treatment



Municipal wastewater treatment throughout Manitoba contributes approximately nine per cent of the total phosphorus input to Lake Winnipeg - or about 19 per cent of the load coming from within the province's borders (Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board, 2006). Winnipeg's North End Water Pollution Control Centre treats approximately 70 per cent of the city's wastewater. It remains the fourth largest phosphorus polluter among all wastewater treatment facilities in Canada (National Pollutant Release Inventory, Environment and Climate Change Canada). These inputs are localized, concentrated "point sources" of phosphorus which means they can be targeted more readily than less-specific, non-point sources. We need to make sure the wastewater that flows down our drains and gets flushed down our toilets is as clean as possible before it enters our rivers and lakes.

Municipalities throughout Manitoba are facing challenges when it comes to replacing or upgrading existing wastewater treatment processes. Implementing cutting-edge, evidence-based technologies to reduce phosphorus loading can be expensive. A restrictive regulatory climate makes it difficult to test out innovative pilot projects. Some jurisdictions don't even recognize there's a problem, which means no one is seeking solutions. The longer we delay dealing with our own point sources, the longer other cities and towns throughout Lake Winnipeg's vast watershed will continue to put off dealing with point sources located within their boundaries. Meanwhile, the costs for wastewater infrastructure upgrades continue to rise - and algae-causing phosphorus continues to flow into Lake Winnipeg.

Investment in civic infrastructure needs to encompass more than roads and bridges. Whether small communities located on Lake Winnipeg's shores or large cities, municipalities across Manitoba must lead by example when it comes to wastewater treatment upgrades if we want other jurisdictions to follow suit. With Action 3 of the Lake Winnipeg Health Plan, **Setting the Standard for Wastewater Treatment**, LWF will encourage local leaders to "walk the walk" and get serious about reducing phosphorus inputs from point sources. Along with our partners, we will champion financial investment in innovative projects that will help reduce phosphorus loading to our lake and offer grants to demonstration projects. We will also support the development of appropriate regulations and urge the adoption of progressive new wastewater treatment technologies.

RESOURCES

- For more information about an affordable proposed solution to reduce nutrient loading from the North End Water Pollution Control Centre (NEWPCC), read the [Interim Retrofit Solution report](#). NEWPCC is the single largest point source of phosphorus flowing into Lake Winnipeg. This report was created by the Lake Winnipeg Foundation in collaboration with the International Institute for Sustainable Development.
- For further reading on the connection between civic wastewater infrastructure and Lake Winnipeg's health, read "[Sewage S.O.S.](#)" This education report was published in the *Winnipeg Free Press* in spring, 2018.

[Lake Winnipeg Health Plan Action 4: Monitoring Our Waterways](#)