

October 26, 2023

The Honourable Ian Bushie, MLA
Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations
Room 301 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8
minmnr@manitoba.ca

Dear Minister,

Congratulations on your re-election as Member of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba representing Keewatinook, and on your appointment as Minister of Municipal and Northern Relations. The Lake Winnipeg Foundation (LWF) looks forward to working collaboratively with you and your cabinet colleagues to protect Lake Winnipeg.

This summer and fall, the algal blooms on Lake Winnipeg were impossible to ignore. Five decades of peer-reviewed research at IISD-Experimental Lakes Area (ELA) has unequivocally demonstrated that [excess phosphorus is the cause of these algal blooms](#). The effectiveness of phosphorus control in preventing algal blooms is widely accepted in science, policy, and management communities; has proven to work across Canada and in many other jurisdictions; and is directly pertinent to the management of Lake Winnipeg algal blooms.

[Yet in Manitoba, we lag desperately behind in addressing phosphorus pollution and its impacts on our fresh water](#). ELA research, which is especially relevant when considering the economic feasibility of various policy approaches to managing algal blooms, has been conspicuously ignored by Manitoba's Environmental Approvals Branch and the Water Science and Watershed Management Branch. Instead, provincial regulators have coupled phosphorus control with expensive and unnecessary nitrogen requirements, escalating costs and leading directly to delays and inaction.

Now, with leadership and clear guidance from your government, there is an opportunity to ensure that provincial investments to reduce algal blooms are [focused on phosphorus – an approach that is both evidence-based and economically feasible](#). Immediately, the Manitoba government can accelerate phosphorus compliance at Winnipeg's North End Water Pollution Control Centre (NEWPCC), the single largest point source of phosphorus to Lake Winnipeg. Since 2005, this sewage treatment plant has been non-compliant with its provincial phosphorus limit of 1.0 mg/L.

In 2022, the Manitoba government committed \$167.4 million to NEWPCC's new biosolids facilities, the next phase of construction at the sewage treatment plant. Since then, the cost of the project has increased to over \$1 billion, of which Manitoba's 2022 contribution represents only 16 per cent.

Under your leadership, Manitoba Municipal and Northern Relations can accelerate phosphorous compliance at NEWPCC. By increasing provincial funding for NEWPCC's biosolids facilities – contingent on these additional provincial funds being used to meet and sustain NEWPCC phosphorus compliance through this imminent next phase of construction – your department will expedite and strengthen evidence-based protections for Lake Winnipeg.

Phosphorus compliance can be integrated into the design of NEWPCC's new biosolids facilities using a chemical method of phosphorus reduction. This method offers a more cost-effective and timely solution than waiting for additional nutrient removal facilities that may take decades and billions of dollars to complete. This expedited approach is consistent with other municipal wastewater treatment plants across North America; can be achieved using well-established, effective technology; and explicitly recognizes phosphorus compliance as the primary requirement of NEWPCC upgrades, as articulated in Section 4.2(2) of [Manitoba's Water Protection Act](#).

On behalf of our members, I am excited to work with you and your colleagues to bring Lake Winnipeg back to health and protect it for future generations. I look forward to meeting with you to discuss the recommendations above, and will follow up with your office accordingly in the coming weeks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alexis Kanu".

Dr. Alexis Kanu
Executive Director