LWF LAKE WINNIPEG FOUNDATION

Submission to the Standing Policy Committee on Water and Waste, Riverbank Management and the Environment

Re: Item No. 7 - Request for Budget Revision for the North End Sewage Treatment Plant (NEWPCC) Interim Phosphorous Removal Capital Project and Item No. 8 - Procurement Model Recommendation and Revised Cost Estimate for the North End Sewage Treatment Plant (NEWPCC) Upgrade – Biosolids Facilities Project

Dr. Alexis Kanu, Executive Director, Lake Winnipeg Foundation

The Lake Winnipeg Foundation supports the budget revision to enable increased ferric dosing capacity for interim phosphorus removal (item 7) and the new enhanced preliminary design for the NEWPCC Biosolids Facility (item 8).

I was thrilled to read these two reports, which provide recommendations from the public service that will accelerate phosphorus compliance and address the City of Winnipeg's responsibility to protect the lake that bears its name.

Five decades of peer-reviewed research at the IISD-Experimental Lakes Area (ELA) has demonstrated conclusively that phosphorus is the cause of blue-green algal blooms in freshwater lakes. Research from ELA has been applied all over the world to successfully reduce algal blooms by reducing phosphorus loads – in Lake Erie (Canada); Lake Geneva (Switzerland, France); Lake Balaton (Hungary); Lake Maggiore (Italy); Lake Washington (US); and Lake Constance (Switzerland, Austria, Germany).[1]

Today's reports present a clear, cost-effective plan to accelerate phosphorus compliance at the north end treatment plant, in line with provincial requirements. The Lake Winnipeg Foundation congratulates the City of Winnipeg for taking this evidence-based, phosphorus-first approach.

The new enhanced preliminary design for the Phase 2 Biosolids Project leverages the interim-phosphorus reduction system to fulfill a recommendation put forward earlier this month by the Lake Winnipeg Foundation, the Lake Winnipeg Indigenous Collective, and the

[1] Schindler, D.W., Carpenter, S.R., Chapra, S.C., Hecky, R.E., and Orihel, D.M. 2016. Reducing Phosphorus to Curb Lake Eutrophication is a success. *Environmental Science and Technology,* **50:** 8923-8929.

International Institute for Sustainable Development. Together, we asked that the new Biosolids Facilities be designed to achieve phosphorus compliance, so that protections for Lake Winnipeg are included within the scope of Phase 2 of the NEWPCC Upgrade Plan.

The additional digester capacity in the new enhanced preliminary design is necessary and inevitable – it's not a question of "if," but of "when." By including this additional capacity in the Phase 2 project rather than waiting till 2037, the City of Winnipeg will:

- Achieve phosphorus compliance much sooner and at much reduced cost than previously planned;
- Reduce wet-weather sewage spills like those we saw almost weekly this past spring;
- Enable continued growth in the city by addressing biosolids capacity limits; and
- Save money in the long-run, by building digester capacity at today's prices, not waiting for tomorrow's prices.

I recognize the cost implications of the recommendations before you. But we must be clear about the cause of these cost increases.

The bulk of that $360 million price increase is the cost of the past two years' delay on this project. Time – project delay – is by far the largest expense you have been presented with today.

Waiting longer to do what is inevitable and necessary will only cost us even more.

We can pine all we want for yesterday's prices – but we really only have a choice between today's prices and tomorrow's prices. Extra digester capacity today costs $130 million. We have no idea what it will cost in 2037 – but I can say for certainty, it will not be cheaper.

Lake Winnipeg Foundation members are grateful to the city's public service, and to this committee of council, for recognizing today the weight of evidence that demonstrates that phosphorus drives algal blooms in freshwater lakes. By taking an evidence-based approach to accelerated phosphorus compliance at the north end treatment plant, the city is doing it part to reduce algal blooms on Lake Winnipeg.

The Lake Winnipeg Foundation (LWF) advocates for change and co-ordinates action to improve the health of Lake Winnipeg. Our long-term goal is to ensure policy and practices informed by evidence are implemented and enforced.

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