

Sender: Coalition to Save Lake Winnipeg

Subject: Focus on Phosphorous Reduction

Message:

The Coalition to Save Lake Winnipeg (CSLW) is a grassroots organisation which emerged out of widespread concern for the degrading health of Lake Winnipeg by people living along the south basin who experience it daily. Our information sessions pull people from across the province of Manitoba with shared concern for the disrespect of fresh waterways including the Red River and the apparent lack of local, provincial or national government will to comply with and enforce standards that would decrease if not stop our collective polluting of this natural life giving resource.

The CSLW's role is: To act as an advocate informing stakeholders and coordinating efforts to save, protect and maintain positive sustainable practices for Lake Winnipeg. As such, our members gather research, track developments and share the information amongst the CSLW membership and beyond. Several members of the coalition attended the information session the IJC held in Winnipeg and were pleased to participate in that forum, and for the opportunity to now contribute in writing on behalf of our membership.

The concerns with Lake Winnipeg, fed by the Red River as well as other tributaries, are neither new nor isolated. The algae blooms are now widespread, seeming to arrive earlier each year. The information available has also evolved from generic science and solutions that have worked elsewhere, to more specific and refined research on the ecosystem feeding the specific case of the Red River and Lake Winnipeg. It is tremendous to see the dedicated efforts of scientists, foundations, Universities and informed citizens working individually and enabling collective awareness of the actions causing the problem and recognizing that our continued inaction will not solve the problem.

Science has revealed, through research and peer review, a consensus that phosphorous overload is the major cause of Lake Winnipeg's degrading health. Other contributors, including nitrogen, which were mentioned in the earlier generic information sessions led to such elaborate infrastructure solutions that government budgets and timetables pushed any hope of implementation off for decades. The analysis of the Lake Winnipeg specific ecosystem has concluded that phosphorus overload is the #1 issue and is so far ahead of the 2nd issue that it renders it statistically irrelevant. This is critical to acknowledge, accept and endorse as it brings the infrastructure solution from a 25 + year implementation plan to a 5-year implementation plan for municipalities along the Red River waterway. In pragmatic terms, this is the difference between never and now.

Many of the scientists and researchers were also present at the Winnipeg IJC open forum and they are best suited to describe the intricate detail of their methodology and findings. The IJC report and recommendations will go forward to Government decision makers to consider as they fulfill their mandates. The role of the CSLW is simply to act as an advocate informing stakeholders and coordinating efforts to save, protect and maintain positive sustainable practices for Lake Winnipeg.

The CSLW is deeply appreciative of the efforts of the IJC in gathering facts and listening to stakeholders' concerns relating to the Red River and ultimately the health of Lake Winnipeg. We look forward to distributing the final report and recommendations of the IJC to our membership.

Coalition to Save Lake Winnipeg