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# **Governance, Management, Regulation, Monitoring and Protecting Lake Winnipeg – With Respect to a Great Lake As Reservoir**

**Presentation to Manitoba  
Clean Environment Commission  
Lake Winnipeg Regulation Hearings:**

**Manitoba Wildlands April 9, 2015**

Manitoba Wildlands has participated in each stage of regulatory processes for Manitoba Hydro projects since the Wuskwatim process began in 2001.

We have reviewed the Clean Environment Commission's (CEC) recommendations after the Wuskwatim Generation and Transmission environmental and 'needs for and alternatives to' hearings in 2004.

Manitoba has not yet met the standard(s) identified in the CEC recommendations. Certainly with respect to the Churchill River Diversion, Augmented Flow Program and Lake Winnipeg Regulation, the mandate for these hearings falls short. As does the Manitoba Hydro approach, during the last 10 years, to priorities identified by the CEC.

A public utility whose social licence to operate is based on living, ongoing practice, would have started 10 years ago to reach towards the intent of these CEC recommendations.

Our aim is to provide the CEC Panel and hearing participants with an overview of the public policy situation for Lake Winnipeg, as a regulated reservoir for 40 years, and as Manitoba's Great Lake.

Please see the Manitoba Wildlands Lake Winnipeg Public Policy report and chart with topic sheets.

## We set out to learn:

- What the public policy framework for Lake Winnipeg has been, is, and needs to be especially given the size of the lake, its watershed and basin - and its state as a reservoir for forty years;
- Whether the public policy was accessible, understandable, and being applied by the utility and Manitoba's governments;
- Whether the utility, and Manitoba government departments, agencies and programs cooperate regarding all aspects of Lake Winnipeg operation as a reservoir, and as an economic engine for several sectors, home to over 25 communities, and habitat for many species in a range of ecosystems;
- What kind of governance, management, monitoring and protection system is in place for the Lake, especially given it is regulated as a reservoir.
- What role Aboriginal Peoples have played in establishing public policy about the Lake.

## What we found

Public policy regarding regulation of Lake Winnipeg, and the establishment of Manitoba's hydro system began in May 1916 when The Conservation Commission of Canada published Water Powers of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. The volume followed an earlier pan Canadian study from 1911. At the time the Dominion Government controlled the water resources of the prairie provinces.

Public policy, programs, studies, regulations, and reports about Lake Winnipeg are a hodge podge of single issue, single location, single species, or single environmental element tools. There is an incremental pattern of new laws, new policies, but most continue to be in relation to one element or one aspect of Lake management, or operation.

All these policies seem to leave the onus on citizens, communities, the environment, and curative rather than preventative management.

That is, once a problem exists a public policy process about that problem will be attempted. The current example is zebra mussels in Lake Winnipeg. The Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board's mandate was reduction of nutrients.

Often a significant lack of access to information, follow up, report back, and over all planning accompany these single element, single issue policies that affect and are affected by our largest reservoir – Lake Winnipeg.

All these policies appear to be hampered by regulation of lake levels in Lake Winnipeg being primary though regulation of lake levels is rarely taken into account in policy or programs.

## Conclusions

A lot of current public policy affects Lake Winnipeg. Manitoba's regulatory system has a lot of laws and regulations, which are pertinent and applicable to Lake Winnipeg and its watershed.

Almost none refer to the fact the Lake is a reservoir. Much of the current public policy and regulatory elements also need to be an ingredient in decisions for regulation of the lake.

While Manitoba Wildlands located a great deal of public policy, there appears to be a huge gap or absence of policy and law that would lead to best governance, regulation, management, monitoring and protection of Lake Winnipeg.

## Recommendations

- Apply a twenty first century lens, and knowhow for the future of the lake. Apply a whole system, whole lake, integrated approach.
- Lake Winnipeg must have a comprehensive governance, regulation, management, monitoring and protection system.
- The communities, stakeholders, fishers, and ecosystems would benefit. There are simply too many players and not enough accountability, planning, reporting, and beneficial outcomes. It should be noted that the Lake Winnipeg Implementation Committee recommended this approach ten years ago.
- We trust the CEC to consider this public policy situation in their report and recommendations.