



News Release—April 24, 2009

## **Government keeps truth about park development from public**

*No answers about deadly Meditation Lake water quality*

The Wilderness Committee is outraged at the Manitoba government's push for a development on the shores of remote Meditation Lake in Whiteshell Provincial Park. The lack of public information, the misinformation coming from Conservation Minister Struthers, and the lack of response from Water Stewardship Minister Christine Melnick adds insult to the secrecy from cabinet.

Within days of the announced proposal, (made after over one year of secret meetings with the developer) the Wilderness Committee filed 10 Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) requests on behalf of the people of Manitoba about the proposed Meditation Lake development. Requests were also immediately made to Minister Struthers and Premier Doer to push back the public open houses at least one week, until after the 30-day deadline for response to the FIPPA filings. This week Minister Struthers denied that request, adding more misinformation.

The Manitoba government has no vision or plan about management of development requests in parks. Manitobans expect the wild areas in Whiteshell Provincial Park to be preserved. Undeveloped natural areas in our parks play a critical role in preserving biodiversity, providing ecosystem services, and mitigating climate change. Whiteshell Park has no current management plan, despite developments being pushed forward.

"This is about our parks," stated Eric Reder, Campaign Director for the Wilderness Committee. "People must realize that the precious wild spaces that used to exist in Whiteshell Provincial Park are disappearing. A secret trade off for a youth camp is just another of a series of similar decisions."

"On top of the lack of parks management demonstrated by this proposal, putting a kids camp on a lake with deadly water quality could be criminally negligent." fumed Reder.

Manitoba Wildlands director Gaile Whelan Enns commented. "Our parks are long overdue for management plans. Manitoba's is losing protected park lands every year, instead of establishing new protected areas. This is another backward action by the Minister."

Complete water quality information requested from Minister Melnick is needed after a mass species die-off occurred in Meditation Lake last summer, and government signs warning of the dangerous water quality were still up in November 2008.

The first public action in objection to this proposal will be at the public open house at 7 p.m. on Thursday April 30 at the Victoria Inn.

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