

Ron Greenwood

We all know that Playboy magazine ranked Grand Beach as one of the top 10 beaches in North America. That was in the 60's and in 1968 I would have been 20 years old so I have a very clear recollection of what a fantastic beach it really was. The beach was wide, the sand was clean and white. The water was clean. When we camped we'd wash in the lake. Now you have to wash when you come out of the lake.

Now the beach is narrow, the sand is brown and trending towards mud and the e-coli are thriving.

It's very sad that the younger generations did not have an opportunity to see Grand Beach as it was. Before Manitoba Hydro turned the lake into the third largest Hydro Reservoir in the world.

Can you imagine how valuable property here would be and how many businesses would be in the area if Hydro regulation had not destroyed the lake. Tourism around the lake would be worth hundreds of millions of dollars today.

We've owned 238' of lake frontage near Balsam Bay since 1971 so we do have on site experience. In the 60's and early 70's we used to canoe in the Beaconia Marsh and I used to hunt ducks there in the fall. The marsh was teeming with ducks and other birds from Spring to freeze up. I knew a fellow from Beaconia who trapped the numerous muskrats in the marsh and made a good profit.

Last year we spent an afternoon kayaking in the marsh. We did not see one duck. Not one duck. The marsh now actually stinks, it's dead. It's a sewer hole. The muskrats are gone. All killed by higher than natural winter lake levels.

The marsh has been destroyed by the continuous high water caused by Lake Winnipeg regulation. That's a given. That's a fact. The science is there.

Manitoba Hydro vs. clean electricity

At one time, Minnesota and Wisconsin power utilities were attracted to Manitoba Hydro electricity because it was considered clean energy. That's no longer the case.

Aboriginal groups from Manitoba have held protests in Minneapolis/St. Paul to inform Americans on how Hydro mistreats the people and their traditional lands and fishing grounds in order to produce electricity.

U.S. environmental activists have asked Minnesota and Wisconsin utilities not to buy any hydro power produced from the Lake Winnipeg reservoir. They are well aware of the environmental destruction that Lake Winnipeg regulation has caused.

So Manitoba Hydro sells power to U.S. customers below the cost of production while we watch the lake and the beaches decline at an accelerated rate.

As we speak, Manitoba Hydro is bullying farmers off some of the most productive farmland in the country in order to run a transmission line, and they don't even have customers for the electricity. How green is that?

715 Ft is meaningless

Manitoba Hydro has had the authority to use Lake Winnipeg as a Hydro reservoir up to a maximum level of 715 ft. ASL. So why is the wind-adjusted level of the lake well above that limit time and time again. In 2011 the lake was well above 715 ft. for the entire season. Hydro's attitude is who cares.

Manitoba Hydro should not be granted a license to regulate Lake Winnipeg when they do not have the capacity to comply with the terms of the licence.

If I do not comply to the terms of any license I hold, I receive a penalty.

Lowering the maximum regulated level

In 1999 Manitoba Hydro issued a statement saying that if they were required to lower their maximum storage level one foot down to 714' ASL it would cost them 300 million dollars. Well, I think they should lower it 600 million dollars in order to save the lake. In that same statement Hydro expressed concern that drawing down the lake one foot might cause people living downstream of the control structure to be flooded. This was the first time Hydro expressed any concern over flooding anybody out. Ask the aboriginal people who are still fighting for compensation more than 40 years later. Besides I'm sure there is at least one person in that Hydro palace on Portage Avenue who is smart enough to know that you don't have to let all the water out in one day.

Unsafe Lake Water due to Toxins.

For a considerable portion of the summer it is not safe to enter the lake due to e-coli and algae-toxin related threats.

Hundred pound dogs have died after entering the lake. If the water in the lake can kill a large dog, it certainly can put a 50lb. Child at extreme risk.

The risk to humans is escalating.

Eutrophication of the lake

For anyone who doesn't know, eutrophication is a condition caused by an over-abundance of nutrients in the lake, which result in harmful algae blooms.

There was a major study of Lake Winnipeg in 1969, one year before Hydro received it's first interim licence to regulate the lake. At that time, scientists from the University of Manitoba determined that 75% of nutrients entering

the lake were discharged into the Nelson River system at the north end. Now, because Manitoba Hydro has the outlet of the lake bunged up, only 25% of nutrients entering the lake each year are discharged. In other words, Lake Winnipeg regulation has caused 75% more nutrients to remain in the lake each year. You don't have to be a red seal plumber to know that every toilet needs a good flush once in a while.

Lake Winnipeg regulation has destroyed the marshes around the lake thus eliminating the nutrient buffering capacity of the wetlands. Result more nutrients in the lake.

1974

In 1974 we had all time high water levels on Lake Winnipeg even though we had below normal precipitation. We lost a lot of property through erosion. People were complaining that Hydro caused the high water because they were damming the lake.

Hydro lied and said "No, it's not us. It's just Mother Nature." I flew up to the north end of the lake and saw with my own eyes the dam holding back the lake. If it wasn't Hydro's dam, whose was it?

Of course a year or so later, Hydro was forced to admit that they had regulated the lake to a high level in order to facilitate construction. No apologies. Hydro's attitude – So What.

Relationship between Manitoba Provincial Government and Hydro.

We can't rely on the Provincial Government to do anything for the lake. The Provincial Government is using Manitoba Hydro as a cash cow and we know they

are hopelessly in debt. When it comes to Lake Winnipeg regulation the attitude of the Provincial Government and Manitoba Hydro are one and the same.

Example:

In 2011 Lake Winnipeg was regulated at a very high level. In fact on July 30th, the wind eliminated level was 717 feet. 2 feet above the licensed maximum. There had been considerable erosion damage particularly on the west side of the south basin. By the fall, people were very upset with Hydro and the provincial government agreed to hold a special meeting at Gimli in mid-November.

Christine Melnick, Minister of Water Stewardship was going to be attending and people were looking forward to some straight answers.

At the meeting it became immediately apparent that the Honourable Christine Melnick wasn't there to represent the citizens, she was there solely to defend Manitoba Hydro.

She shut the noisy crowd up with this statement. "The damage and erosion this year (2011) was not caused by Lake Winnipeg Regulation. The worst damage to the shoreline ever was in 1974 and Hydro did not even start regulating Lake Winnipeg until 1976". That was her trump card and it worked.

The problem however, was that her statement was not true. Hydro received an interim license to regulate Lake Winnipeg in 1970 and the main cause of the high water and the damage in 1974 was a hydro dam to facilitate construction projects at the north end of the lake.

Someone said to me Christine Melnick is an NDP minister and she wouldn't say anything that is not true and she wouldn't willfully make misleading statements.

This is the same Honourable Christine Melnick that was kicked out of the NDP cabinet for lying to the Legislature.

Clean Environment Commission

We know what the problems are. We know Lake Winnipeg regulation has caused most of the problems. We know that in order to save the lake, the Clean Environment Commission will have to reduce the maximum operating level of the reservoir.

If Manitoba Hydro will not or cannot comply with the terms of the license, there must be severe penalties involved.

In 2013 Lake Winnipeg was named the world's most threatened lake by the Global Nature Fund. -- (let's get that in perspective...the world's most threatened lake, only a few hundred meters from where we are standing)—

The Clean Environment Commission has the opportunity and the obligation to act on behalf of the lake and on behalf of Manitobans.

Unless these hearings are a complete sham, there will be significant changes made on how Hydro operates the reservoir.

The fact that all members of the Clean Environment Commission have been appointed by the NDP government is somewhat concerning.