

Presentation to the Clean Environment Commission
Manitoba Hydro's Request for a Final License for Lake Winnipeg Regulation
February 4, 2015 6:30 p.m. Selkirk

Thank you for this opportunity. My husband, John Anderson and I own property located approximately thirteen miles by boat from the mouth of Lake Winnipeg on the Red River.

The Commission was asked by the Minister of Conservation and Water Stewardship to consult with communities and look at the reasons why Lake Winnipeg Regulation came into being in the early 1970s, whether it succeeded or failed in meeting its initial goal and the impacts and effects of it since its first operation in 1976. The Commission can comment on concerns raised about issuing a final license. But you have not been asked to advise or recommend whether or not a license should be issued past the year, 2026. Instead of reviewing Manitoba Hydro's request for a final license for Lake Winnipeg Regulation, you are to report back to the Minister on the concerns from people and to suggest how to address these concerns. You are also to review the negative impacts, if any on the environment.

The current license expires in 2026 and Manitoba Hydro is requesting a final license for another fifty years. It is my understanding that the next license will operate between 712 and 716 feet above sea level (asl) not the current 711 and 715 asl – but one full foot higher. If that happens, more of the landscape will disappear under water. I already know I will not be here fifty years from now and certainly if the license is allowed, neither will the land, shorelines or riverbanks.

I think back over the past few years, having talked with neighbours, commercial fishermen, construction contractors, engineers, shop owners, and local old timers. I asked these people why the lake is so high. The answer is always the same: Manitoba Hydro; they use the lake as a reservoir to keep the level high in order to make money for the province. Higher water: Increased profit.

I hear reports from fishermen who state lake levels have been as high as 720 feet asl; on days without wind events. A retired lake boat captain said, when I showed him a map that defined the lake level as 710 feet asl, that the lake average was lower than that in past – 709, even 708 feet asl. I hear about the demands for more electricity and how the province wants to sell power to Saskatchewan and the United States. People say our province relies on Manitoba Hydro as a cash cow.

As I listened to all of this and compared the findings from others, I checked into our past. I too see the changes in the water levels. I see how the lake is easily two to three feet higher than normal. The boat launch in front of the Anderson family cottage is long under water. I don't hear the birds in the marsh anymore. The wetlands have disappeared. Every time the north winds rises, I fear for the people I know who live along the lake. I watch as lake water back-washes, pushing the Red River up onto our pasture. I have witnessed water in our front pasture far too many times.

I have lived on the Red River almost all my life. My family moved to the area in 1971. John's great-grandfather arrived in Willow Point (near Gimli) in the late 1800s and throughout the years, his family owned property in Sandy Hook, Ponemah, Muckles Creek, and on the Red River near Sugar Island and Selkirk. John has never heard his family talk about floods or flooding. Family pictures show beaches of sand dunes in the 1960s at Sandy Hook and John recalls driving the family car down onto a concrete boat ramp directly in front of the Ponemah cottage to wash the car in lake water.

It appears to me that Lake Winnipeg Regulation is slowing the flow out of the lake and storing water for winter power, which keeps the lake artificially high. The marsh doesn't see any restorative draw downs. Netley Marsh needs both highs and lows and I think Lake Winnipeg Regulation has interfered with the state of nature.

Manitoba Hydro says Lake Winnipeg experienced flood events in 1927, 1950, 1954, 1955, 1966, 1968, 1969 and 1970 and that these floods caused problems for people living on the lake, that farmers lost crops, highways were closed and homes and cottages were lost. This has not been my husband's family's experience. Neither did I find any evidence that our river property flooded in those years.

However, in recent years, we have had overland flooding that we can directly correlate to the high water on Lake Winnipeg. High water has encroached, flooding one third of our property during flood events.



Swamped out river shore

Canada Day 2014

When John and I owned a cottage at Chalet Beach during 1999 - 2005, half a kilometer east from Peguis Fishing Station, we did an experiment. We placed a wall of limestone rocks on our land (that was then under water) at a 57 degree angle, due north. Up to that time, a third of the property was in the lake. The result was reclaimed beach front. That is the nature of the lake and the storms. That means highs and lows. The lake level water must be allowed to draw down. Unfortunately, our reclaimed beach did not last and when I returned this past summer, the devastation was disturbing. We have allowed Lake Winnipeg to be used as a reservoir. That equates to the lake staying at an average height, far too high, where there are no means for the landscape to return to what is was before Lake Winnipeg Regulation was implemented. I believe that draw downs, also reduces the likelihood of wind elevated events.

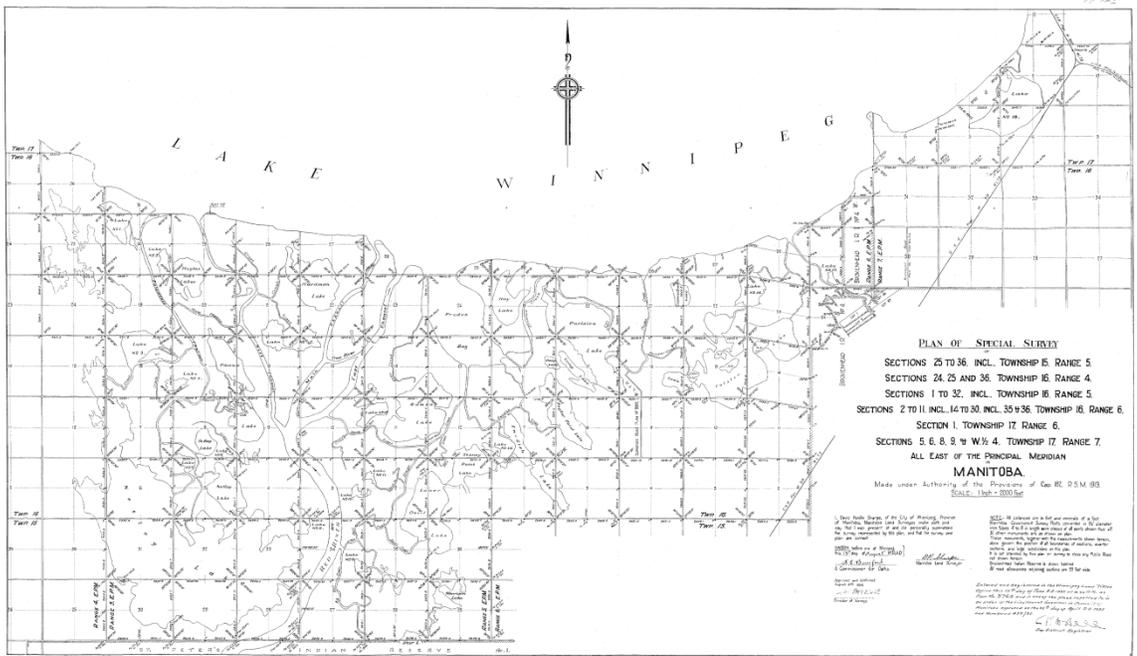


Chalet Beach
July 25, 2014

Salamonia Channel can be
seen in the distance

While we had the cottage at Chalet Beach, John and I used to walk on Hagar's Road to see evidence of life past. I recall a '29 Ford Model T coupe off the side of the road, proof that the road existed in earlier times. The lake level has been held too high for too many years and the change to the shoreline and resulting erosion is shocking. The maintained high water levels are destroying the lake shores. Find below a copy of a map from 1934 that clearly depicts survey posts and small lakes and numerous channels. The road that we live on, now referenced as End of Main, used to go on well into the marsh where farmers once cut hay. A ferry operated across Netley Creek and John's grandfather recalled travelling up that way many times in past.

In preparing for this presentation, I looked at water maps I have collected and archival aerial photographs of our property dated from 1950, 1968, 1970 and 1993. I hold copies of lidar maps dated 2004. When John and I flooded in April 2009, the first time ever, that led me onto a quest for why we flooded. I researched our river property to 1859. I cannot find any past evidence of flooding before Lake Winnipeg Regulation. I have interviewed people and reviewed historical accounts including Henry Youle Hind, a geographer who toured the area in 1857. His writings speak about the bogs, marshes, and ridges that were here.



Plan of Special Survey — 1934

When John saw the navigational piers at the Main Channel on Lake Winnipeg during the summer of 1972, he recalls seeing the piers attached to land. He says they were built there to keep the sand from filling into the Main Channel. I first saw these piers in August 1987 when he took me for a ride through Netley Marsh and into Lake Winnipeg. I recall seeing a number of islands of wetlands as we followed a winding river path and arrived at the trunk of the Red River. Three well marked channels gave us a choice to take the east, main or west. As we travelled towards the piers on the Main Channel, I vividly recall seeing shoreline and trees. Sadly, this area is now under water.



Looking North
 Lake Winnipeg at the
 Red River mouth
 June 2013

Does Lake Winnipeg Regulation help to prevent flooding? No. When I returned to our former cottage last summer, I found that more of the shoreline had disappeared. Hagar's Road was under water. There used to be farms in the area. There used to be roads into the marsh where local farmers drove their cattle and where they went to hay during late summers. No, Lake Winnipeg Regulation isn't helping to prevent flooding. Instead the landscape is disappearing and areas along Lake Winnipeg and the Red River are slowly turning into a water world.

Recently, John and I learned that our riverfront property was originally owned by Joseph Monkman Sr. a local farmer. Mr. Monkman had purchased the property back in 1859 from Aboriginals who had lived there before him. I confirmed this at the Provincial Archives.

Norman Cochrane, a direct descendant of Mr. Monkman, and a farmer himself, told us to build on the ridge, it never floods. His family had lived on the property for over one hundred years. Norman spent his entire life on the property since his birth in 1923 until his passing in 2001. Today, when I look across our land to the north, where my eye follows the ridge line, his ninety-year-old house still stands. Burnt remnants from previous homes can be found on our land still. It makes sense that people do not build houses and barns where it floods.

There were beaches, sand dunes, tree lines well before Lake Winnipeg Regulation. We know the natural level of the lake was 710 feet asl. Are we really in a wet cycle? Do we have more water in our water shed due to climate change, to Mother Nature? Do we have increased water due to drainage? Lake Winnipeg is used as a reservoir by Lake Winnipeg Regulation. I have seen with my own eyes, the changes in the lake water levels.

I think Lake Winnipeg Regulation alters the annual water cycle by artificially causing a seasonal reversal with higher water levels for winter power production. No wonder Netley Marsh never gets to dry out! Before, the marsh had a chance to dry out from time to time. In a state of nature, the water was high in the spring and low in the fall. That was reversed by Lake Winnipeg Regulation.

Lake Winnipeg belongs to all Manitobans. Why did we allow Manitoba Hydro to use the lake? In the 1960s we were promised that Lake Winnipeg Regulation would prevent flooding. If this is the case, where are the miles and miles of pristine beaches from those days? Those beaches are gone now. Netley Marsh, a world renowned bird migratory corridor is disappearing.

When I first saw Lake Winnipeg at the age of eleven in 1972, I saw sandy beaches with well established tree lines. My family had a cottage in Matlock and enjoyed Half Moon Bay. Most of the beach and shoreline is gone now. We also camped at Wayside Park and at the End of Main on the Red River where I recall flourishing tree lines along the river and Netley Creek. John recalls visiting the End of Main back in 1971 and seeing permanent boat houses. Do people build cabins and boat houses to flood? My research indicates that there were a few low spots that did flood in spring, but not month after month and year after year, like it does now.

A couple of days ago, I returned to the Manitoba Hydro website and looked at a report. I read this statement: "Average lake levels are lower with LWR in place." (Lake Winnipeg Regulation – Invited Technical Session January 20, 1915; Appendix four, slide 26)

I do not agree.

In a very short time period of a few decades and under our very noses, the state of nature has been changed. Lake Winnipeg Regulation has become man's natural disaster; it subjects us to manmade flooding.

See two pictures I took, taken in front of the Anderson family cottage located on the west side of Lake Winnipeg, in the south basin.

The first picture of a dog running on the beach was taken in August 1993. The lake level was already too high. In fact, a cement boat launch located in this area, had gone under water. The second picture, taken in the same location is from July 2013. The trees and bush behind the dog in the 1993 photo are gone. The shoreline is gone. The water level is now into the tree line on the roadway.



August 1993
In front of Anderson
cottage
Ponemah



July 2013
In front of Anderson
cottage
Ponemah

I disagree that Manitoba Hydro should be reissued a license. I disagree that they should have control of lake levels under the guise of Lake Winnipeg Regulation. I disagree with artificially held high water. Water levels need to drop to allow wetlands and agricultural lands to replenish. If not, then

Lake Winnipeg Regulation will continue to flood us out. And if that is the case Manitoba Hydro needs to buy us out, so that we can move on with our lives.

I suggest the following points:

- Lake Winnipeg Regulation be managed by an independent entity other than Manitoba Hydro.
- That the next license expires in ten years, not fifty. Thereby allowing for future reviews.
- Lower the lake level to the state of nature. 710 - 711 feet asl. So that marshes can have the ability to regenerate the way they did before.
- Return the water flows back to the state of nature by eliminating the reversal of water flow. That is artificial. Changes must be carefully considered to minimize further damage.
- Install additional water level gauges to find true numbers for lake levels instead of averaging present levels across the lake. I think my sources, the commercial fishermen, when they measure the lake may be onto something.
- We have been rerouting Manitoba's lakes and waterways far too long. A Manitoba wide assessment for water management by an independent third party is required.
- Compensation for property owners as Disaster Financial Assistance does not begin to cover true costs. Perhaps Manitoba Hydro should be sharing their revenues so that affected citizens can make decisions to raise their homes and protect what is left or to move out of the area completely.

Please convey these concerns to the Minister and also tell him that we must not be forgotten. If Lake Winnipeg Regulation is about Manitoba Hydro making more money, then we all need to remember the costs to the environment, to the First Nations living downstream, to the people living all along the lake and to us, residing upstream on the Red River. Only with low water levels will the marsh wetlands and the lake and river shores return, leaving a lasting legacy for future generations.

Thank you.

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