

CEC Presentation – March 11, 2015

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(Commission Secretary)

Thank you for the opportunity to present at these hearings. My name is Penny McMorris and I am a property owner in the RM of Victoria Beach. I am in my second term as an elected councillor for the RM of Victoria Beach and I am a property owner in the City of Winnipeg. My presentation is not made on behalf of the RMVB Council but as a private citizen however some of my comments and information are based on information that I have learned or been made aware of as an elected official.

Over the past 40 or so years our municipality has been corresponded with the various Provincial Governments and Manitoba Hydro regarding water levels and the impact on our shorelines. In the early 1970's my father-in-law, Dr. L.S. McMorris, was a councillor for the RM of Victoria Beach. At that time and in that capacity he wrote a letter to the Province regarding their plan to allow Manitoba Hydro to apply for a licence to regulate the level of Lake Winnipeg. He wrote of the need for more studies to be done on the impacts that controlling the water levels at any level higher than 711' or 712' would have on shorelines in our municipality. He wrote about the impacts of erosion and flooding that our municipality had already experienced with high water and wind affects on our mostly sandy shorelines. He discussed the high financial, physical and emotional impacts then and into the future that the protection of our shorelines and the protection of our shoreline properties would cost all of our taxpayers. He asked for the Provincial Government and Manitoba Hydro's support and for financial discussions to occur that would help defray some of those many costs. In a letter to our municipality dated May 13, 1976 from the Director of Operations for the Water Resources Division it was noted that the expected level of Lake Winnipeg would reach 715.7 during late May, 1976 and then recede. Emergency dikes were to be constructed to a minimum level of 719'.

My father-in-law was a member of the RMVB Council for 29 years, Reeve for 23 of those. He registered his concerns with Manitoba Hydro's proposed licence to regulate Lake Winnipeg for the first time in 1973, and I am presenting to you over 40 years later with virtually the same concerns and requests. The shorelines of our municipality, indeed most of the shorelines in the South Basin, were hit extremely hard in the weather bomb of October 2010. Our municipality put together a Shoreline Advisory Group made up of members from every area of our small RM to work toward a solution for our community. Norm Branson was hired as a neutral, knowledgeable facilitator and the head of the Provincial Government's Shoreline Erosion Technical Committee was also a contributing member of the Group. We held numerous group meetings and 3 public forums and the Group put together a document to help us move forward. One of the recommendations of the Group and the community was to hire an engineering firm to study the science of our shorelines and to help us come up with a Shoreline

Management Plan. The municipality hired Pete Zuzek of Baird & Associates, Coastal Engineers out of Toronto to work with us to develop a plan to protect and preserve our shorelines and our beaches. To date our taxpayers have spent close to \$500,000 on this plan. We were grateful for a \$100,000 grant from the Province in the early stages. It is interesting to note that the Manitoba Clean Environment Commission recently commissioned a report from Mr. Zuzek of Baird, entitled, *"Lake Winnipeg Erosion and Accretion Processes", A Compendium to the Lake Winnipeg Shoreline Management Handbook*. I commend you for enlisting his expertise and I understand Mr. Zuzek will be presenting his report to the CEC on March 23, 2015.

Manitoba Hydro and members of the Manitoba Government should be very familiar with the work that Baird has done on Lake Winnipeg in the past. Baird worked with Stantec Consulting Ltd. in September 2000 to research and prepare the *Lake Winnipeg Shoreline Erosion Study* for the Lake Winnipeg Shoreline Erosion Advisory Group. Much of the information from that study was incorporated into the *Manitoba Conservation - Lake Winnipeg Shoreline Management Handbook, March 2001*. It continues to be the go-to guide for the Shoreline Erosion Technical Committee, under Conservation and Water Stewardship. Unfortunately the SETC can only make recommendations on shoreline protection structures. They do not have any legal power, authority or jurisdiction to ensure that shoreline protection around the South Basin is done to prescribed engineering codes or specifications. That is left up to each individual municipality or planning district to deal with, or not. I would like to be able to ensure that our shorelines are protected and preserved in a cohesive, effective manner and the RMVB Shoreline Management Plan is almost ready to present to the taxpayers in that regard.

When Manitoba Hydro began regulating the outflow of Lake Winnipeg in 1976 climate change was not really a topic of discussion. The extreme, rare weather and storms that we have witnessed in the past few years are out of Manitoba Hydro's control. The excessive amounts of water that are now pouring into Lake Winnipeg from the almost one million square kilometre watershed is not something that Manitoba Hydro can control. The Netley-Libeu marsh in the south basin has been flooded consistently which makes it unable to regenerate the natural filters marshes provide to our water and the water quality in our lake is severely compromised. So what can Manitoba Hydro control or manage in a more sustainable way while still providing the electricity required to all its customers?

According to a study written by Dr. Raymond Hesslein, titled *"An Assessment of the Effect of Regulation of the Outflow of Lake Winnipeg on the Levels of the Lake"*, he maintains that there are excellent records of all the major inflows into the Lake (Winnipeg River, Saskatchewan River, Red River, Assiniboine River) going back to 1913. Dr. Hesslein goes on to say that at levels between 711 and 715 feet Manitoba Hydro can operate the outflow to benefit its electricity production. Manitoba Hydro needs to work toward maintaining a lower lake level,

possibly 714', which will allow a necessary and acceptable balance for their power needs, the property owner's safety and shoreline retention and protection. Utilize the statistics and records available to predict inflow thereby allowing better management of the outflow. Ensuring that those downstream of the dam on the Nelson River are safe and protected is also imperative.

Manitoba Hydro is a valuable resource for all tax payers of Manitoba and for our Provincial Government. We enjoy relatively low electricity rates and our Provincial Government enjoys a steady, rather healthy financial income from the sale of electricity to Manitobans and our neighbours. Lake Winnipeg provides the Province and Manitoba Hydro with that rich resource. The lake shore municipalities, property owners and those who make their living on the lake need to know that they can count on the Province and Manitoba Hydro to financially participate in their erosion and flood protection planning and implementation. Help us work toward solutions to protect our properties and our public beaches for all to enjoy. Work with us to ensure that the financial burdens of shoreline protection and preservation are not all shouldered by the taxpayers and property owners in smaller municipalities. Work with us to ensure that cohesive, sound engineering practices are used when private or public shorelines require erosion or flooding protection. Recommend a regulation of Lake Winnipeg to a manageable level between 711' and 714' that will afford the sensitive shorelines some room for extreme weather, destructive winds and the resulting wave uprush as climate change continues to affect us all.

Lake levels from June 15, 2014 through to October 19, 2014 ranged from 715' on June 15; remained at 717' or 718' fairly consistently until October 12, 2014 and then went as low as 714' on October 19 only to rise again to 716' on October 26. The top of the current operating range is supposed to be 715'. This past spring, summer and fall, the incredibly hard working EMO crew from our municipality again repaired or constructed emergency dikes that now must be a minimum level of 722', as dictated by the Province and 3' higher than the 1976 minimum dike level.

Manitoba Hydro and the Provincial Government need to work with climatologists, scientists, engineers and the many special interest groups and organizations focused on Lake Winnipeg and her watershed. It needs to be a priority to work with these groups and other governments to find sustainable ways to protect and rejuvenate the Netley-Libau Marsh to improve the quality of our lake. You must be stewards of Lake Winnipeg and support research to find ways to combat aquatic invasive species and to help find ways to clean up our lake. The benefits we and the Provincial Government all receive from Manitoba Hydro are huge and so too must their efforts be to give back and support the communities and people who live, work and play, on and in Lake Winnipeg.

The Provincial Government and Manitoba Hydro need to seriously consider reducing the top operating range of the final licence to 714'. Providing adequate financial contributions to communities who are struggling with erosion, flooding and the financial implications of high water levels on our shorelines must be part of the final licence agreement. The Provincial Government and Manitoba Hydro's participation in permanent dikes and community shoreline protection programs should be a priority.

I know that the RM of Victoria Beach would welcome the opportunity to meet with Provincial Government officials and Manitoba Hydro to discuss our Shoreline Management Plan and to share the research that led to this Plan. Together we can benefit many municipalities along Lake Winnipeg's shorelines.

Thank you,

Penny McMorris, Councillor

R.M. of Victoria Beach

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