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May 28, 2014

Clean Environment Commission

RE: SCOPING OF LICENSE FOR LAKE WINNIPEG WATER REGULATION SUBMISSION OF  
RECOMMENDATIONS

Dear CEC Board,

Please accept this submission which I have asked Vicki Burns to present on my behalf as I am at work. I am a resident of the East shoreline of Lake Winnipeg and current President of the Manitoba Association of Cottage Owners Inc.. As a full-time lakefront resident since 2002 and a cottager since 1963 in the Balsam Bay area I am requesting that you consider some of my observations and the need to restore some of the natural behavior of Lake Winnipeg for the health and preservation of our Lake's future.

I feel that the need to regulate the levels of Lake Winnipeg have brought some disparaging results over the last 30 years. Almost every landmark and area that I adventured and admired as a child is gone. The bays are now open expanses. The beaches and coastal marshes that I explored and admired for their wildlife and aquatic life are all gone along the Southeastern shore of Lake Winnipeg. Where I used to spy on a youth centre on Beaconia Beach and sneak up on birds and catch turtles, mudpuppies and watch the Great Blue Herons is gone. The foundation of the youth centre which was a couple of hundred feet from the water is now in the lake. Beaconia Marsh is dug up and no longer has the Eagle Nests and only Carp remain. Other little micro marshes along the shoreline we used to see neat mussels and snails are long gone. What were bushes and huge landmark trees are completely gone except for the odd stump sticking out of the water.

I used to adventure the Brokenhead River delta, the lakes along the South Shore and the tributaries of the Red River. None of this is now possible. Where channels once existed is now a silted and lifeless marsh which is impassible in a boat. Special equipment is required just to access. Netley-Libau Marsh is destroyed and has little to offer any more. The vegetation is disappearing rapidly and no longer offers habitat.

I used to look forward to the South winds pushing the water out and exposing the sandy bottom of the lake. It was so cool to see the water move out a couple of hundred feet exposing the sand bars and offering an amazing plain of discovery finding all sorts of things on the lake bottom. Building little cities in the sand and rock groins along the shores. Then we would get some Westerly and North West winds that would blow this sand up on the beaches building them up. It was all part of the ever-changing shoreline. It was an integral part of the survival of the lake.

What has not been discussed, except by the few trying to save Netley-Libau Marsh, is the fact that tidal fluctuations are absolutely necessary for the survival of much of Lake Winnipeg's habitat and shorelines. The low tides lead to sand and rock build up of the shorelines. These buildups on the shores protected

the high water marks of Lake Winnipeg. They gave it some sacrificial ground to fall prey to the storms so there was much less exposure of the fragile clay embankments to the Northwesterers. The wide beaches would keep the water back and the shallows would break the waves stealing their power and minimize the erosion of the banks. This protected land, beachheads and coastal marshes from massive destruction.

We now have had 30 years of regulation, and we are losing everything at an accelerated pace. We have lost the shorelines along the lake. The beaches never build up so they are narrow, steep, rocky and the only protection they offer are the rocks that have fallen out of the banks. There is hardly anywhere left to put a lawn chair if you can find a way to get to the beach. The Rural Municipality of St. Clements has removed all accesses to the beach. The lake has created 12-30 ft cliffs that are impassible and dangerous and nobody can maintain stairs that will survive the storms. There are no low tides to bring the sand in, so the beaches and water's edge are very rocky and difficult to navigate to get to the sand bars. Several of our neighbours who are seniors sold their properties as they had not been able to access the beach in our development for 5 years. It was no fun anymore. The Grand Children did not want to use the beach and could not get to it anyway. They go to Grand Beach.

The maintained high water levels are only discussed for their supposed benefits. They are killing us. We have lost all the sandy beaches. Patricia Beach is destroyed. Only about 30% of Beaconia Beach remains from 30 years ago. The history of Beaconia Beach and Beaconia Lake goes back into the 1800's and we are not going to have any trace of it remaining in less than 20 years. I am seeing many times the rate of erosion of properties in the last 20 years than occurred prior to regulation.

Netley-Libau Marsh is disappearing rapidly and the distinct lakes within that were mapped as recent as 1906 are difficult to even find now. The water stays high and the marshes cannot establish sacrificial growth in the shallows because the tides never go low enough for this growth to occur. That means that every storm and high water is taking more growth and destabilizing the silty basin of Lake Winnipeg. The water is not even so sandy and muddy but has become mucky with clay from shoreline erosion. So has the water at the edge of the rocks all along the lake. This was never the case 40 years ago.

I have pictures of our property when it was developed in the late 50's early 60's. We have some in later years also. The land is disappearing twice as fast on an annual basis now compared to pre-regulation rates and no long-term future exists for hundreds of properties along the lake. Until the lake levels are allowed to reach low tides, we will never see the beaches rebuild. We will never see anything but continued destruction of our marshes and habitats all along Lake Winnipeg.

Continued rapid erosion of shorelines is contributing to man-made pollution of the lakes. It is destroying the marshes that used to exist where natural drains enter the lake. This means we are drastically reducing the natural filtering effect of our diminishing wetlands. This has been proven beyond my personal observations. We need our filters more than ever with the huge increase in flows from the Red River. We are exposing the lake to many nutrients from previously developed land and agricultural and pasture land being swallowed up. This also explains some of the E-coli levels we are seeing at the shorelines.

I am asking the CEC to add some concerns to the scope of investigation prior to approving any license to regulate Lake Winnipeg. We need to see some studies of the following:

1. Lake Winnipeg Levels and rate of erosion of land and shoreline over the last 125 years
2. Lake Winnipeg Levels and the effect on habitat area around Lake Winnipeg
3. Lake Winnipeg Levels and the population of species around Lake Winnipeg's Riparian Zone and Marshes
4. Lake Winnipeg Levels and the effect of tides on plants and algae growth
5. Lake Winnipeg Levels and the effect on aquatic species from disappearing habitat
6. Lake Winnipeg levels and the ability to flush nutrients with regulated outflows
7. Lake Winnipeg levels and the effect on the population of people utilizing the shorelines for daily recreation and the types of recreation
8. Lake Winnipeg levels and the effects of erosion on the ability of the marshes to filter runoff
9. How high Lake Winnipeg Levels have affected communities economically
10. Lake Winnipeg actual levels at many more points of measurement and a live database to be made available which is not ignoring "wind setup" or showing "average" levels. We experience the real levels and not the average ones. This information is almost impossible to come by including the location of points of measurement.

These topics of study will give a much better scope of the effects on the economy, the ability of people to enjoy the use of the lake, and the effects that regulating Lake Winnipeg are causing with a more long-term view. I think they can challenge many of the papers that have been published suggesting any beneficial effects of regulating the lake. I have not seen any benefits. Residents around the lake are spending millions of dollars a year now to try and protect what they have left. Many of those projects are failing and engineers are struggling to provide effective solution. These studies need to be examined by the many biologists we have in Manitoba who understand the effects of tide on Lake Winnipeg.

The bottom line is that we require periods of low tide on Lake Winnipeg. It is a necessity to ensure the survival of our lake, the habitat, the wildlife and aquatic life. It is causing millions of dollars of damage a year and costing many communities their very existence as people are not utilizing the beaches for days on end as there are few sand beaches left. Even those that remain are struggling to get crowds they once had to regulate due to over capacity. Nobody leaves their chairs or boats on the beach as they will surely be gone if the wind even blows a bit as the lake level is far too volatile now. Hardly anyone has a fire on the beach any more as there is no real shoreline to enjoy and it is too close to the trees to be safe. Please consider these many factors I have listed as they are the reality. Today's children are not able to experience what I did and generations before me did as they introduced me to the wonders and beauty of the Lake Winnipeg shoreline that is rapidly disappearing under water forever.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Dave Crabb

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