Chairman, members of the hearing panel, representatives of government, other appointed personnel and audience.

My name is Linda McMillan. I am here to speak today as a long time property owner in the Rural Municipality of Victoria Beach and as a member of Council for the RM

The primary focus of my presentation will be on the level of Lake Winnipeg and its effects on our municipality. (I do have concerns about the state of the lake and Netley Marsh, but David Suzuki has clearly laid those issues out in his documentary made a few years back).

Let me begin by stating – This committee must recommend changes to the parameters under which Manitob Hydro operates. Sincethe first years Manitoba Hydro has failed to operate within guidlines set forth in the 1970'S. For many months in each of the past years the lake has been held at a dangerously high level.

The natives knew that the water levels in Lake Winnipeg rose and fell according to wind direction and rainfall. Their descriptions led Laverendrye to assume that he was heading to the ocean because no lake would ebb and flow. In flood years, the fluctuation is exacerbated. Anyone who lives along the lake is aware of the peculiarity of our lake.

Back in the late 80's I was the editor of the Victoria Beach Herald. There was worry about the level of the lake and the erosion that was occurring. Many of the residents of the municipality hoped that the precursor of this committee would help us by ordering Manitoba Hydro to hold the water level in Lake Winnipeg between 709 and 713 feet above sea level, not the 715 upper limit. Hydro placed ads in our little paper showing that in past the lake level had fluctuated and that since they had controlled the lake level things were not worse. They based their statements on their level monitoring equipment placed at Berens River near the narrows roughly in the middle of the lake.

Now some would say that the corporation is doing the only logical thing by monitoring the average level of the lake at mid-point. How else can you determine lake level?

Here is a thought. We know that the lake level fluctuates depending on location. Strong south winds in summer often push the water from the south basin to the north basin. Conversely winds from the north push water from deeper north basin into the more shallow south basin. Fisheries and Oceans has monitoring equipment at many locations in the lake. One can monitor the south basin levelif one wanted to. The data that Manitoba Hydro generates suits their purpose. The mid-point (used by Hydro) is not the only way to monitor lake level.

And here is the reason I make that statement. In the course of a year, every point on the earth gets the same amount of daylight hours and the same number of night time hours. Every spot gets about 4380 hours of daylight. And, if we lived at the equator, that is what we would experience – 12 hours a day every day. (the same as Hydro does with its averaging of lake level)

As Manitobans we have a different understanding of daylight hours. Here in the south we know that days vary in length from 8 hours roughly in December to 16 hours in June. If we lived in the far north or

in Antarctica we would experience 24 hours of daylight in summer and 24 hours of darkness in winter, but it still adds up to 4380 daylight hours a year.

We have different ways of measuring day length. There is no reason to only measure the lake level in terms of level at the mid-point of Lake Winnipeg. The lake level should not be a simple average. Graphing the data would be more complicated but it would be far more accurate. There would be greater understanding of the effects of high water on our great lake.

I am aware that this is not a popular thought to members of government who believe that Hydro is "Manitoba's oil" to quote our Premier from a few years ago. My statement would be even less acceptable to officials in Manitoba Hydro.

There are even Reeves in municipalities in the south basin who would disagree. They are the Reeves of municipalities on the west shore of the lake. I can understand the viewpoints of those Reeves to a certain extent. In Manitoba, we rarely get east winds. Their communities are not affected often by high waves crashing on their beaches caused by east winds. Some Reeves do understand as they are affected by north or south winds. Most municipalities along the west shore have had help reinforcing their shore lines. At Victoria Beach , on the south eastern shore of Lake Winnipeg, we are strongly affected by west winds, and north winds and most seriously by north west winds. And we have had no help reinforcing our shores.

Manitobans often discuss the high water events of 2011 or 2012 and the resulting devastation. In Victoria Beach, We discuss the high water of late October 2010. That is when our First Responders and many others in the community were on alert- MOVING BOATS, MOVING VULNERABLE SENIORS, DYKING AND EVENTUALLY LOOSING.

THERE WERE BOATS IN THE TREES, PARTS OF THE COMMUNITY WERE FLOODED AND MUCH LAND ERODED INTO THE LAKE.

The lake level – already riskily high, rose by 4 feet caused by strong winds from the north west that blew for 3 days. I have never seen anything like it. Waves were crashing over the federal pier. Water flooded 3 miles to the south until a road stopped its motion.

There was nothing we could do, but there was something Manitoba Hydro could have done. Why would the lake level be so high when Manitoba normally experiences north winds in autumn and winter?

Winds do blow the water from the north basin to the south basin.

Failure to see the risk in holding Lake Winnipeg at high levels puts our community at risk.

EFFECTS ON OUR COMMUNITY

As a result of the storm we lost much of the municipal public land reserve set aside when the community was formed 100 years earlier. Several individuals lost feet of property. They were frightened and took remedial action. They built a rock revetment to prevent future erosion.

Because some of that rock went on crown land, others in the community launched legal action. Our community was torn apart. Most sales of property ceased. The case is languishing in the courts because the province has taken no action in the 4 years since.

In 2011, the municipality assembled the Shoreline Advisory Committee. I sat on that committee. We studied the damage done by the storm of 2010; commissioned W.F. Baird and Associates Coastal Engineers Ltd. to study the wave action and sand movements. They looked at options for saving our land. Their report was delivered to the municipality yesterday. The solution that they suggest will cost between 5 and 6 million TO BEGIN WITH.

We don't have that kind of money.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

The cheapest solution to our problem is to insist that Manitoba Hydro be ordered to hold the lake at a lower level. We would recommend 713 feet above sea level. That way when engineers and hydrologists miscalculate the amount of water reaching us from snow accumulations in the water shed, or when we have unpredictably high rainfalls, or when farmers in Saskatchewan dig ditches or those in Minnesota and North Dakota and now Manitoba install more tile drainage to remove the water quickly from their fields and into the Red River, there is room to hold the water that comes our way.

Manitoba Hydro controls the lake level. They tell us that they are wise and concerned. They say that the outlet gates are totally open, but 99 % of Manitobans must take their word for it, because the dams are in remote areas of the province far away from most of the population.

If it is not possible to lower the lake level, MANITOBA HYDRO SHOULD TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DAMAGE THAT HIGH WATER CAUSES. They should be paying for the shoreline protection that we need. They have helped other communities, but see no reason to help us. OUR SMALL RM IS FACING MILLIONS OF DOLLARS OF EXPENSES TO STOP FURTHER EROSION CAUSED BY HIGH WATER.

Another solution would be help from the province. The province benefits when Hydro profits and traditionally has not stood up and called for better protection for lakeside communities. They could pay for solutions suggested by Baird.

There is another way that our cash strapped government could help us if there was a political will. This could sound like a weird solution to our need to protect ourselves.

40 years ago, the Pawley government decided to help out SOME rural communities by forcing SOME cottage owners in Manitoba to pay school taxes to school divisions. For our municipality there were no benefits, no vote, no ability to send a child to school, NOTHING . The RM of Victoria Beach is being asked to pay more than $2,200,000 to educate *14* children. If instead we were asked to pay $25,000 or

$30,000 per child to cover the transportation costs and the share of the child's teacher, we would have an extra $2,000,000 and be able to protect ourselves from high water.

It is another solution.

So to sum up. I would be happiest if our community were made safe by open the gates and lowering the lake level. A level of 713 would be safe for us. Then in times of strong wind or unusual rainfall we would not be facing disaster

If that cannot be done, we need financial help to try to make our community safe by implementing the recommendations of the Baird report. (Pete Zuzuk from W. F. Baird will be speaking to you on Monday of next week)

This can be done by Hydro providing financial compensation for the damage they cause and not hiding behind the "act of god" clause.

OR (and this is the most unlikely solution) the province could change their unjust school tax laws, thereby freeing the tax-payers of Victoria Beach to cover the costs of protecting the community from erosion ourselves.