

OPEN LETTER TO THE PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENT OF MANITOBA

Manitoba's Lakes Need Our Help

Protecting Wetlands and Shorelines is Essential for Maintaining Healthy Lakes

As a province of over 100,000 lakes—including Lakes Winnipeg, Winnipegosis, and Manitoba that rank among the largest on the planet—Manitoba has an abundance of fresh water for which we have a responsibility to be good stewards, for the sake of our present needs and for those of future generations.

The watersheds and shorelines of our lakes are dominated by wetlands which are universally recognized for their rich diversity of plants and animals, and their ecological importance as “nature’s kidneys”. Wetlands are a natural transition zone between the landscape and water. They are the first and last line of defense for the protection of lake water quality. They intercept a wide range of chemicals, including ones that degrade water quality. Healthy wetlands and intact shorelines can bind up or destroy these chemicals.

Our lake shorelines and coastal wetlands are threatened by numerous factors, including erosion, invasion by exotic species, water level management, and human development. Two recent cases—the construction of a boat channel at Beaconia Marsh and the extensive erosion of altered shorelines on Lakes Winnipeg and Manitoba during windstorms—illustrate the threats to our wetlands and shorelines, and the benefits we lose when they are degraded.

We call on the Government of Manitoba to order a temporary halt to all new developments affecting wetlands and shorelines until it can develop a rational, consistent policy—founded on sound, scientific principles—to ensure the development is done responsibly and sustainably, without compromising the benefits we receive from natural, healthy shorelines and wetlands. And we call on the people of Manitoba to become informed of and to participate actively in the protection of wetlands and natural shorelines, for the benefit of healthy lakes and healthy communities.

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