

Question 1

Whole-lake studies on Lake 227 at Canada's Experimental Lakes Area (ELA) over multiple decades demonstrate that phosphorus controls the growth of blue-green algae blooms. This research has driven important policy changes that have greatly improved Great Lakes water quality. This same research points to the need to maximize phosphorus removal from the City of Winnipeg's sewage.

Manitoba's Clean Environment Commission, the Province of Manitoba, the City of Winnipeg, and freshwater scientists from around the world agree that removal of phosphorus from Winnipeg treatment plant effluent is imperative to reduce algae growth on Lake Winnipeg. However, action to achieve this has been stalled for over a decade. In December 2015, Winnipeg's North End plant released effluent with almost four and a half times the recommended phosphorus.

How will you and your party resolve the longstanding stalemate that continues to prevent action to remove phosphorus from Winnipeg's wastewater? How will you ensure immediate action is taken ensure phosphorus in Winnipeg's effluent does not exceed 1 milligram/litre?

GPM Response:

Through the Green Infrastructure Fund of \$166 million annually that will be created from revenues from a \$50/tonne carbon tax, the GPM will finance required initiatives to see that Winnipeg's water treatment plants are brought up to required standards. As well, the GPM will direct funds to those initiatives that reduce the run off of phosphorous from farms.

Question 2

The eutrophication of Lake Winnipeg is a significant environmental threat caused by human activities occurring across a watershed that is 40 times larger than the lake itself. Improving, protecting and managing the health of Lake Winnipeg for long-term sustainability require financial investments commensurate with the scale and complexity of the challenge.

To protect Lake Winnipeg, Manitoba's department of conservation and water stewardship (MCWS) is responsible for water quality management, water monitoring programs, regulation of Manitoba's fisheries, and zebra mussel containment initiatives.

Over the past five years, MCWS's budget has been repeatedly cut – a troubling trend given that the health of Lake Winnipeg continues to decline while the cost of effective, sustainable solutions continues to rise.

Will you and your party commit to increasing MCWS's budget to rebuild the department's core capacity to monitor and manage Manitoba's valuable freshwater resources? To which other MCWS programs would you direct further investment?

GPM Response:

Yes. The funding for this will come from the Green Infrastructure Fund mentioned above in the response to Question 1. The GPM would consult with groups like yours to determine the range of MCWS programs requiring additional investments to fulfill their mandate.

Question 3

Wetlands keep our water clean by filtering out excess phosphorus. Bill 5, the *Surface Water Management Act (Amendments to various acts to protect lakes and wetlands)*, died on the order paper in the last legislative session. This bill was the result of four years of public consultation, had the support of both conservation and agricultural communities, and would have been an important first step in protecting Manitoba's threatened wetlands.

The introduction of a new and strengthened *Surface Water Management Act* must be an immediate priority for Manitoba's new government. A revised bill should be based on the premise of no net loss of wetland benefits and put in place a drainage moratorium on seasonal (class 3) wetlands – equivalent to the protection granted to permanent and semi-permanent wetlands (classes 5 and 4).

Will you and your party commit to rapidly re-introducing a comprehensive bill enabling strong regulatory protection of Manitoba's threatened wetlands?

GPM Response:

Absolutely. The GPM will also introduce measures to incent farmers to convert low lying areas of their farms into wetlands and to discourage further drainage of their fields.

Question 4

Phosphorus inputs to Lake Winnipeg are driven by the amount of water flowing across the lake's vast watershed. Monitoring where, when and how phosphorus is entering our waterways is vital to improving the health of the lake.

The most recent publicly available data on phosphorus levels in Lake Winnipeg and its tributaries are from 2007. Since then, Manitoba has experienced two of the worst flooding events in its history.

To make smart water-management decisions, Manitoba needs a collaborative water-quality monitoring program that measures the impact of high-water events such as spring melts, floods and storms, and that draws on expertise throughout the province. Data must be made public so that all Manitobans know what's happening, and what remains to be done.

How will you and your party develop and fund a collaborative, events-based monitoring program? Will you also commit to regular annual public reporting of collected data?

GPM Response:

The GPM will consult with experts to determine the most cost effective approach to monitoring water quality and it will commit to the annual public reporting of the collected data.

Question 5

Recent media portrayals have led to widespread public perception that Lake Winnipeg cannot recover. Inconsistency in the way solutions are presented has left citizens concerned about what's been accomplished, what's left to do and who's responsible. Independent oversight is necessary to ensure our actions are adding up to real impact.

Though multiple collaborative initiatives and reports have generated hundreds of recommendations over the last decade, no mechanism exists to ensure these recommendations are being followed, or to evaluate the cumulative effectiveness of current efforts.

Establishing an Office of the Environmental Commissioner – as has been done federally and in Ontario – would create a means through which Manitoba’s existing programs could be reviewed and aligned, and compliance could be enforced.

Do you and your party support the establishment of an independent Office of the Environmental Commissioner of Manitoba?

GPM Response:

Yes and we would commit to funding it adequately through the Green Infrastructure Fund.