



# NDP Responds

Note: We have yet to release our full platform but here are the answers to date outlining our commitments.

## Lake Winnipeg Survey

Canada currently has an \$88 billion water infrastructure deficit (Our Living Waters Call to Action for the Next Government of Canada). Increasingly frequent extreme weather events caused by a changing climate are introducing additional uncertainties and costs. The City of Winnipeg's North End Water Pollution Control Centre, immediately upstream of Lake Winnipeg, is the fourth-largest phosphorus polluter among all wastewater treatment facilities in Canada (National Pollutant Release Inventory, Environment Canada) and costs for much-needed upgrades continue to rise.

*How will your party address Canada's water infrastructure deficit to protect our fresh water in the context of a changing climate?*

**NDP Response:** Our water is the envy of the world. As our climate changes, we have a responsibility to protect it. Canada is one of the only industrialized countries without a water strategy. Instead of creating a viable strategy, Stephen Harper's Conservatives have stripped away protections for our lakes and rivers. And they gutted environmental protections without any debate by burying significant changes in their omnibus budget bills. Tom Mulcair's NDP will establish a National Water Strategy. We'll protect clean water as a right, strengthen and enforce drinking water standards, pass laws that make polluters pay, and ban bulk water exports.

Tom Mulcair has outlined plans to build a new relationship with municipalities to build the infrastructure Canadian communities need. The NDP will respect provincial and local decision-making, simplify application processes and remove funding barriers through direct, stable and transparent transfers to municipalities and provinces, for their priorities. It will ensure the long-term success of municipalities. We will start with investing the equivalent of one additional cent of the existing gas tax. This will provide additional funding in the first year that will ramp up to an additional \$1.5 billion invested at the end of a first mandate. This NDP initiative will provide annual, stable, long-term investment for infrastructure projects.

2) Across the vast prairie landscape that drains into Lake Winnipeg, approximately 17.5 hectares of wetland habitat are destroyed every day (Ducks Unlimited Canada). Without these natural ecosystems to act as filters for melt and storm water, excess nutrients continue to flow unchecked into Lake Winnipeg, causing harmful algae blooms. Wetland destruction also exacerbates drought and flooding at enormous cost. In 2011 alone, flood-related costs in Manitoba exceeded \$1.2 billion (Manitoba 2011 Flood Review Task Force Report). A strong, coordinated approach to wetland protection is necessary in the Prairie provinces. With the health of Lake Winnipeg at stake, time is of the essence; leadership is critical in the next four years.

*How will your party ensure wetlands protection is in place by 2019?*

**NDP Response:** According to Natural Resources Canada, Canada owns about 25% of the world's wetlands, covering roughly 14% of our land mass. These wetlands provide important ecosystem services, are important habitat and are key to the water cycle—that's why it's critical that we conserve and restore them. The NDP believes that we must implement policies that endeavor to maintain and restore wetlands, guarding them against development and other activities.

The vital role wetlands play make them an indispensable tool in the battle against climate change. We are already feeling the impacts of climate change, and the effects are expected to worsen over time. With Canadian cities facing a multi-billion dollar infrastructure deficit, it makes good economic sense to take advantage of the many benefits provided by natural systems, including wetlands. Accordingly, restoration and conservation should be part of Canada's climate change adaptation and mitigation plan.

3) The current federal investment in Lake Winnipeg is \$18 million over five years, \$7.4 million of which was administered through the Lake Winnipeg Basin Stewardship Fund (Lake Winnipeg Basin Initiative, Environment Canada). This funding is insufficient, as evidenced by the fact that the fund – intended to last until 2017 – ran out of money in early 2015.

*How much more will your party invest in new research and coordinated regional solutions to address the root causes of harmful algae blooms in Lake Winnipeg?*

**NDP Response:** The solution to blue-green algae requires scientific research, coordination, and increased investment.

An NDP government will work to reverse the damage the Conservative government has done to our scientific capacity. Stephen Harper's Conservatives have waged an ideological war on the scientific community. The Conservatives fired over 4,000 federal researchers and science personnel and slashed over \$1.1 billion in federal spending on science and technology since forming a majority. They've muzzled federal scientists and have limited the government's ability to gather data and evidence. They have closed science libraries and destroyed decades of research and data, and they've cut funding for Canadian researchers by \$250 million since 2007, and reduced the independence of Canada's granting agencies.

We will create a Scientific Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, headed by a Chief Science Advisor to ensure that our government always has access to the best possible scientific advice from experts in all fields. We will put an end to the Conservatives' policy of muzzling scientists and ensure that Canada's leading experts are freely available to speak to the media and to publish their findings. We will implement the NDP's comprehensive plan to promote the voice of scientists in Ottawa as laid out in our motion (M-453) to promote scientific integrity. We will work to re-establish scientific capacity in government departments, including Environment Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. We will establish the Office of the Parliamentary Science Officer as per Bill C-558, to ensure that parliamentarians have the best possible access to science-based analysis.

4) Strong leadership is necessary to protect Lake Winnipeg and to ensure our solutions are commensurate with the scale of the problem. LWF's Lake Winnipeg Health Plan includes eight concrete, sector-specific actions to restore Lake Winnipeg (The Lake Winnipeg Foundation). Guided by the scientific advice of nationally recognized freshwater researchers, it is now being realized in partnership with conservation organizations, industry associations, educational institutions and community groups. The Lake Winnipeg Health Plan is a vehicle for collaborative action.

*Will you support this plan? How?*

**NDP Response:** As stated above, the NDP believes that science is key to good decision making, and restoring science to support initiatives like the Lake Winnipeg Health Plan is essential to long-term sustainability. We support the principle of the plan, and will work with the other partners to ensure it is put in place.