



LAKE  
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## Update on Winnipeg sewage treatment

News  
LWF  
August 2, 2019  
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*Algae blooms at Connaught Beach and Lester Beach, July 2019; Photos (clockwise from top left): Murray McCaig, Jennifer Engbrecht, Carter Brooks, Laurie Bennett*

**Update: The city's request for an extension for NEWPCC upgrades is now under review by the provincial regulator.**

Manitoba Sustainable Development's Environmental Approvals Branch must assess the city's submission and decide whether or not to grant its request for a two-year extension. (The city has asked for a new deadline of Dec. 31, 2021, to come up with a plan that would include a revised date for a full plant upgrade and potential interim implementation options for phosphorous reduction.)

Until the province responds, the deadline by which the city is to reduce phosphorus in NEWPCC effluent to 1 mg/L or less remains Dec. 31, 2019.

Manitoba's election is Sept. 10, and improving sewage treatment in Winnipeg is one of [three commitments we encourage lake-lovers to ask of their provincial candidates](#). (We also put this question – plus two others – to each of the four main parties. [You can read their responses here.](#))

In particular, we want to know how the next provincial government will ensure that the City of Winnipeg takes immediate action to address the NEWPCC's impact on Lake Winnipeg – and what consequences it will impose for non-compliance.

**This is an active file and we will continue to monitor it very closely. We requested a copy of both the city's submission to the province and its review of interim phosphorus-removal options. The city has subsequently released its submission online [here](#).**

On July 31, the City of Winnipeg responded to Manitoba Sustainable Development's request for a revised plan for upgrades to the North End Water Pollution Control Centre (NEWPCC). This sewage treatment plant is the single largest point source of phosphorus contributing to the growth of algae blooms on Lake Winnipeg.

The city's submission was to include "interim options to expediate phosphorus removal" in advance of full plant upgrades. For the past year, LWF and our partners at the International Institute for Sustainable Development have been recommending an [interim retrofit to the NEWPCC](#) that uses a chemical called ferric chloride to remove phosphorus. This retrofit would reduce phosphorus in NEWPCC effluent by 70 per cent, bringing the facility into compliance with its provincial operating licence.

The City of Winnipeg has rejected our proposal. As reported by multiple media outlets, city officials say they will not be pursuing any interim solutions for phosphorus reduction.

We find this response unacceptable. We refuse to believe that no interim options exist.

Many other jurisdictions have been meeting similar phosphorus limits for decades – and Winnipeg must follow suit.

City officials dismissed our proposal, stating that Winnipeg’s north end plant cannot handle additional sludge production. However, sludge management infrastructure at the NEWPCC is not currently operating at full capacity, and could be increased significantly with regular repairs and maintenance.

Already this summer, thick algae blooms have polluted the water and coated the shorelines of several eastern beaches. We share the frustration felt by so many lake-lovers. We’re tired of delays and excuses.

We are not giving up. We will continue to push the city for the immediate implementation of phosphorus-removal technology at the NEWPCC, and we will be reminding the provincial government of its responsibility, as environmental regulator, to safeguard Lake Winnipeg – and impose consequences for non-compliance.

## How you can help

**If you live in Winnipeg, [contact your city councillor](#) to let them know that inaction is unacceptable.**

Here is an example of an effective letter:

*“I live in your ward and am reaching out today on an issue that matters deeply to me: the impact of the North End Water Pollution Control Centre (NEWPCC) on the health of Lake Winnipeg.*

*I am greatly troubled to know that our city’s under-treated sewage pollution is the single largest point source of phosphorus to Lake Winnipeg. Excess phosphorus is causing potentially harmful algae blooms on Lake Winnipeg, the 10th largest freshwater lake in the world. I own a cottage on this beautiful lake and have seen firsthand the algae blooms that plague its waters every summer.*

*I understand you have decided not to pursue any interim implementation options to expediate phosphorus removal – even though you were explicitly asked to do so by the provincial government. I also know current plans to upgrade the NEWPCC have delayed phosphorus removal until 2035.*

*Inaction is unacceptable to me.*

*As your constituent, I ask you to immediately implement phosphorus-reduction technology at the NEWPCC to improve the health of Lake Winnipeg.*

*Please reply to let me know where you stand on this issue.*

*Sincerely,*

*Your name”*

**Remember to customize your comment as much as possible, and aim to be clear and concise with your message.** A printer-friendly version of this template letter is [available here](#).

Here is just some of the media coverage of this situation:

[Winnipeg Free Press](#)

[Winnipeg Sun](#)

[CBC Manitoba](#)

[Global News Winnipeg](#)

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