

NDP hypocrisy threatens lake

Our unelected Premier Greg Selinger must have painted his NDP government as “clean and green” at least a dozen times in a public radio debate on Bipole III with Opposition Leader Hugh McFadyen earlier in the summer. Yet when it comes to digging an emergency channel to accelerate the drainage of Lake Manitoba into Lake Winnipeg, he and his ministers Christine Melnick, Bill Blaikie, Rosann Wowchuk and Stan Struthers, are quite willing to bypass the kind of thorough environmental review that would be normal for a project of this magnitude. Something smells here.

This is not to imply that the owners of cottages and permanent homes and the ranchers and farmers along the former shoreline of Lake Manitoba and the First Nations people along Lake St. Martin are not deserving of early relief. But the question needs to be asked as to why we are in this situation. I suggest that it is from years of water mismanagement and neglect by the NDP government.

Draining the 2011 flood waters into Lake Winnipeg that have been deliberately poured into Lake Manitoba through the Assiniboine Diversion, laden, as uncontrolled flood waters always are, with nutrients and micro-organisms, spells nothing but trouble for Lake Winnipeg. It didn't need to be that way!

Why are there no plans for dams to store more water in the Assiniboine Basin? Why is Manitoba not negotiating with Saskatchewan to develop dams to hold water back temporarily and in a controlled fashion on the Souris, the Qu'Appelle and the upper Assiniboine Rivers? Why are we not doing anything to restore the deteriorating flow capacity of the Assiniboine River channel east of Portage la Prairie? Why do we continue to accept water in the Red River at Emerson that accounts for 59% of the phosphorus feeding into Lake Winnipeg? Where are the plans to restore the former capacity of the Netley and Libau Marshes to naturally “filter” out nutrients?

Once the waters from Lake Manitoba reach Lake Winnipeg, the lake will be not be “clean” but it will be green alright—with algae. Most Manitobans recognize the irony and the hypocrisy of a priority-challenged government that wants Hydro to waste a billion dollars on a far western Bipole III in the mistaken belief that doing so will improve its chances of getting a UNESCO World Heritage Site designation while it causes further deterioration in the health of Lake Winnipeg.

Unfortunately for all Manitobans, emergency measures taken by the NDP government are no substitute for lack of political vision.

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