



Whiteshell Cottagers Association Incorporated

December 13, 2017

Honourable Rochelle Squires

Minister of Sustainable Development

Manitoba Provincial Government

Email: minsdev@leg.gov.mb.ca

Dear Minister Squires:

On behalf of the Whiteshell Cottagers Association, I would like to wish you and your Department of Sustainable Development a happy and fulfilling holiday season.

Our Association recognizes that your Department is amid its planning and priorities exercise for the next fiscal year, 2018/19– both regarding Programs and resource funding. It is with these budgetary appropriations in mind, our Association would like to see your Department take a bold new step in fiscal planning for the Park by including an allowance in your annual operating budget – starting with the 2018 /19 fiscal year, that is specifically designated for the renewal of the aging infrastructure throughout our Park. Such an allocation would coincide with the current consultations and discussions between your Departmental officials and the Manitoba Provincial Park Cabin Owners Association (MPPCOA) that would see a **cost recovery position** taken regarding financial management in Manitoba Provincial Parks. This financial management approach is very central to the consultations presently underway.

Whiteshell Park infrastructure is crumbling! Most of this infrastructure dates to the early 1930 to 1970 period. It is long overdue for replacement or upgrading to service a dramatic increase in the number of people using the park, as well as a dramatic increase in precipitation rates resulting from the climate changes we've witnessed over the last 25 years, and continue to undergo. Our membership is greatly encouraged by your commitment in our December Whiteshell Echo to begin the process of dredging the boathouse access channels on the south shore of Falcon Lake. Built by the Province in the mid – 1960's to attract cottagers to develop this lake shore area - which was otherwise unsuitable for boating, these channels were carved out of silty – sandy soils, which are inherently unstable in wet conditions. The channels were intended to service very small boats compared to those in common use today. Today's larger boats require more draught and a wider channel than those of 65 years ago.

2D - 1975 Corydon Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3P 0R1

Phone (204) 487-0556 Fax (204) 488-9176

wca@whiteshellcottagers.com

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Our current priorities projects include:

1. An approximate \$150,000 for **dredging of the boathouse access channel** (as well as engineering, and cost for removal and replacement of water lines, etc.) known as **Block#10** at Falcon Lake. An additional \$300,000 to complete the **dredging of a second boathouse access channel (Block #12 / 23)** at Falcon Lake. Engineering work (that was not done prior to its original construction) needs to be done to identify a stable cross section and configuration for the channel for both Block #10 and #12 / 23. Because of the unstable soils, the existing "U" shaped channel may need to be reconfigured to give it a stable cross section. This will likely involve widening the channel (reducing the embankment slope) with possible rock ballasting the toe (to keep the embankment from sliding); and possible widening the "U" shape to make room for the wider channels - together with relocating up to 50% of the existing docks and boathouses in this block.

Cost sharing of a portion of the relocation work may warrant consideration.

2. Manitoba Infrastructure is currently planning for construction of a new level control structure for Falcon Lake. However, the **Falcon River has proven inadequate** for use in controlling the water level of Falcon Lake, so needs to be upgraded (dredged) to provide the necessary capacity. In the alternative, lake water could be pumped into the river, provided the in-flow into the lake was reduced by diverting the **Falcon Creek, by-passing the lake** and discharging directly into the Falcon River. Further study to quantify the amount of dredging is required, however, it is expected to cost in the order of \$150,000. The additional cost for a "pumped" control facility (compared to a gravity control structure) would be assumed by Manitoba Infrastructure. Dredging some 9 km of the Falcon River (to provide an equivalent level of control system effectiveness) would come at a ***much higher cost***.
3. **Reconstruction of Falcon Lake's south-shore road** serving some 400 +/- cottages east of the Falcon River causeway – is sorely needed. Again, this road was never built properly and requires an extraordinarily high level of maintenance to permit even a 30 km / hr travel speed. Providing this road with a sub-base using engineered fill reinforced with geotextile, with a mixed granular base ("A" base) with tar and gravel (chip seal) finish will permit reasonable travel speed, reduce the dust generation, and reduce the maintenance required to a far more reasonable level. This project should be budgeted in the order of \$8 million, which could be divided into smaller projects carried out over a 3 to 5-year period.

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4. **Flooding at Caddy Lake** in the last 25 years, has occurred every second year on average (compared to every 10 to 15 years prior to 1990), due to rising precipitation rates associated with climate change. The primary constraint is an inadequate drainage channel under the CN Rail line downstream of Caddy. Flooding causes severe embankment erosion and damage to shoreline infrastructure. This problem was first studied by the Province in 1976, however, no remedial action has been taken by the Province, and rising precipitation rates have exacerbated the problem severely. Increasing the capacity of this drainage tunnel is expected to cost in the order of \$6,000,000 (escalating the 1976 estimate).
5. The existing **water level control structure for Caddy Lake** (a fixed flat top weir) ensures rapid drawdown of the water level – to the point where the level during July and August is frequently inadequate for normal recreational use. Remedial action is needed to modify the existing 100 ft. long discharge control weir by adding an adjustable water retention section (stop logs) on top. Cost of this addition is expected to be in the order of \$1,400,000 (again – by escalating the 1976 estimate).
6. Like Caddy Lake, the existing **water level control structure for Betula Lake** ensures rapid drawdown of the water level – to the point where the level in July and August is frequently lower than optimal for recreational use. Remedial action is needed to modify the existing approximately 150 ft. flat topped discharge control weir by a combination of raising a portion of the fixed weir, and providing a fixed tapered section to provide a progressively lower rate of discharge as the water level receded. Because this site is more readily accessible than the weir controlling Caddy Lake, the cost of this work is expected to be in the order of \$1,500,000.

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The Whiteshell Cottagers Association would like this undertaking to introduce a new era in planning for needed infrastructure repairs throughout the Park. The Park needs improvements to water level control structures, upgrading of local access roads, and boat launches throughout the park. Our recent survey of members identified the above as the top priorities requiring our immediate attention. We have 3400 cottages paying annual lease fees in the park today providing millions of dollars to fund such urgent requirements! We also must contend with precipitation rates that are 25% higher than they were when our infrastructure was built – rates which are forecast to increase a further 25% over the next 50-year period.

WCA's Infrastructure Committee chaired by Alan Roberts has been meeting regularly to discuss water level concerns with both Manitoba Infrastructure and your department. There has been agreement on many of the recommendations Mr. Robert's Committee has proposed. The next step is funding approval.

The objective of this letter is to seek a further substantial funding allotment for the current budgetary period – fiscal year 2018/19 - along with the funds allocated to dredging the Falcon Lake boat channels.

A list of the priority projects needing action with background and estimated funding requirements is attached for review.

I look forward to discussing these matters further at your convenience.

Your Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronald S. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ronald S. Smith

President,

Whiteshell Cottagers Association

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