

August 9, 2000

**WIDE AREA PLANNING TO BEGIN
FOR EAST SIDE OF LAKE WINNIPEG**

Conservation Minister Oscar Lathlin has announced that the Manitoba government is initiating the process of wide area planning for land and resource use on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

Wide area planning is a major recommendation of the Consultation on Sustainable Development Implementation (COSDI) Report that was formally adopted by Manitoba Conservation as a central feature of the province's sustainable development strategy on June 29.

"Our objective is to establish a process, in collaboration with the public, local communities, industry and First Nations, that will ensure comprehensive public involvement in the wide area planning process for the east side of Lake Winnipeg," said Lathlin. "The East Side Planning Initiative will provide the opportunity to develop a consensus among these interests with a common vision for land and resource use now and in the future."

Lathlin said that this initiative is significant because it is the first specific initiative to arise out of COSDI and will serve as a prototype for similar planning in other areas of the province. "The initiative will set the standard for public involvement for wide area planning in the future.

"Future land and resource allocation and proposed developments must address social, environmental, health, cultural and economic needs of local communities, First Nations and various stakeholders. In order to address the interests and concerns of these groups, any planning must be done in an integrated and co-ordinated manner."

The minister said the planning process will examine some of the current major issues and options for the area, including the potential for expanded timber harvesting and associated value-added development, all-weather road access and a new hydroelectric transmission line through the region.

Under Phase I of the project, a three-member government review panel will be established to consult with First Nations, local communities, the public, industry, non-government organizations and others interested in the future of the area.

Lathlin said the panel will gather views and make recommendations on several elements of the initiative including:

- the steps and timing for the planning process;
- the boundaries for the planning area; and
- the establishment of an East Side Lake Winnipeg Round Table and a larger Stakeholder Advisory Committee.

Phase II of the planning initiative calls for the round table and advisory committee to develop a work plan, conduct public meetings and provide recommendations on a wide area plan for the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

Lathlin said the public is encouraged to participate and provide their input regarding the development of an appropriate process to facilitate the planning initiative in late summer/early fall. He said information materials and the support of government staff will be available to the communities and other stakeholders to help in the planning initiative.