

May 14, 2002

**FONTAINE CHAIRS FIRST OFFICIAL MEETING
OF EAST SIDE LAKE WINNIPEG ROUND TABLE**

The first official meeting of the East Side Lake Winnipeg Round Table is taking place today, Conservation Minister Oscar Lathlin has announced.

Chaired by Phil Fontaine, the round table will advise government on a sustainable land use plan for the East Side of Lake Winnipeg.

"We are fortunate to have Phil Fontaine leading this very important mission to develop the east side of Lake Winnipeg using a sustainable planning approach," said Lathlin. "This is a unique region of the province because of its vast expanse of undeveloped boreal forest."

Lathlin noted that broad area planning is being used for the first time in association with the region. This approach involves integrated, co-ordinated planning based on the sustainability of the ecosystem.

Broad area plans ensure future land, resource and development decisions address the environmental, social, health, cultural and economic needs of the public, local communities, First Nations and various stakeholders and interest groups.

The use of broad area planning across the province was recommended in the Consultation On Sustainable Development Implementation (COSDI) Report (July 2000). The COSDI Report also recommended the development of a provincewide protocol on land and resource decision-making, based on an inclusive public process and meaningful consultation with First Nations and Aboriginal communities.

The East Side Plan will also be consistent with existing provincial government initiatives and commitments including Treaty Land entitlement, the Protected Areas Initiative and accompanying First Nations MOU, Priorities for Sustaining Manitoba's Forests, the Northern Development Strategy and the Manitoba Water Strategy.

"Communities in the east side region lack the transportation networks and economic opportunities that most Manitobans take for granted," said the minister. "We have involved area residents, First Nations, industry, environmental groups and other interested parties in preliminary discussions. We are now moving on to the plan preparation and adoption phase through the public process of the round table."

Fontaine is former national chief of the Assembly of First Nations and grand chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs.