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EAST SIDE LAKE WINNIPEG ROUND TABLE CHAIR APPOINTED

Phil Fontaine to Lead Round Table Consultations

Phil Fontaine has been appointed to chair the East Side Lake Winnipeg Round Table (and stakeholder advisory committee), Conservation Minister Oscar Lathlin announced today.

The announcement comes just in advance of the presentation of the final report of Phase I of the wide area planning process that will take place in the coming weeks. Phase II, expected to begin by early spring, will include developing a work plan, conducting public meetings and providing recommendations on a wide area plan.

"Our objective has been to establish a process, in collaboration with the public, local communities, industry and First Nations, that ensures comprehensive public involvement in the wide area planning process," said Lathlin. "I am pleased that Phil Fontaine has agreed to chair the round table as we work through Phase II to develop a consensus among these interests with a common vision for land and resource use now and in the future."

Fontaine has worked on behalf of First Nations for more than 30 years, both as an elected leader and in a number of senior government positions. At the age of 27, he became chief of Sagkeeng First Nation. From 1978 to 1981, he was the regional director general in the Yukon Region. He served three terms as the grand chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and as national chief of the Assembly of First Nations from 1997-2000.

"I look forward to working with residents and stakeholders on this important process," said Fontaine. "It represents an opportunity to create a model for development in Manitoba."

Wide area planning was a major recommendation of the Consultation on Sustainable Development Implementation (COSDI) Report, adopted by Manitoba Conservation as a central feature of the province's sustainable development strategy in June 2000. The Manitoba government initiated the process of wide area planning for land and resource use on the east side of Lake Winnipeg in August of that same year.

Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Minister Eric Robison also welcomed the announcement, saying this is an important development for the residents of the east side of Lake Winnipeg.