

Shoal Lake #40's “Freedom Road”

Open Source Information Summary

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Much of Shoal Lake #40 is located in Ontario, cut off from Ontario's "mainland" by a causeway between it and Iskatewizaagegan #39 Independent First Nation (a.k.a. Shoal Lake #39). While a barge service is available during the summer, and vehicles routinely cross the ice in the winter, Shoal Lake #40 is concerned about the safety of such an arrangement. Shoal Lake #40 has been seeking an all-season road under its "Freedom Road" campaign, calling for a road connecting the reserve to the Trans Canada Highway. Because of the geography, such a road would run through Crown Land in Manitoba.



The most recent protest in support of Shoal Lake #40 took place in Winnipeg on December 8, 2014 during a meeting between the Chief of Shoal Lake #40, Winnipeg's mayor and Manitoba's Minister responsible for relations with the City of Winnipeg, where the Chief said that "collaboration, partnership and a strong willingness to work together" were the key points from the meeting ^{1 2 3}. More recently⁴, Winnipeg and Manitoba officials have said they're willing to work with Shoal Lake #40 on the project.

In February 2015, Shoal Lake #40 Chief Erwin Redsky told media that the First Nation cannot support a proposed twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway until funding commitments for the all-season road into the community are confirmed. ⁵

Shoal Lake #40 (as well as neighbouring Iskatewizaagegan #39) is also concerned about what it considers a lack of adequate compensation for allowing Winnipeg access to Shoal Lake for drinking water while having its activities limited. In 1989, the City of Winnipeg set up a \$6-million trust fund in exchange for unrestricted access to the water from Shoal Lake. Shoal Lake #40 receives interest payments from the fund and is banned from any project that could affect water quality.⁶ The First Nation also says being cut off from the mainland makes it more expensive to build a water treatment plant⁷. Most recently, the band has pointed to the irony of Winnipeg being briefly disrupted by a boil water advisory while the First Nation has been on such an advisory for more than 15 years^{8 9 10}.

Representatives of nearby Iskatewizaagegan #39 have gone as far as publicly threatening to cut off the flow of water to Lake of the Woods, which would eventually lower the level of Shoal Lake to the point where Winnipeg's water intake would not work^{11 12 13}.

Groups and individuals supporting Shoal Lake #40 in its water quality campaign include the International Joint Commission¹⁴ (which has asked for information about Shoal Lake #40's concerns from Canada and the United States), David Suzuki¹⁵, Amnesty International¹⁶, the Council of Canadians¹⁷, and Idle No More Manitoba¹⁸.

On February 3, 2015, a consultant for the First Nation issued a public Request for Proposals seeking *"Design Consultant Services for the planning, design and construction phases for a 25km all season road and structures between the existing Shoal Lake 40 road system and the Trans Canada Highway"*. The deadline for submissions is February 18, 2015.¹⁹

In early March 2015, the City of Winnipeg reportedly allocated \$2 million to build a bridge over the causeway in Manitoba between Shoal Lake #40 and the Trans-Canada Highway.²⁰

Source Links

- ¹ <http://www.winnipegnews.com/2014/12/08/ontario-reserve-wants-manitoba-to-pay-for-new-road>
- ² <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/shoal-lake-40-rallies-for-highway-link-to-first-nation-285182331.html>
- ³ <http://aptn.ca/news/2014/12/08/shoal-lake-chief-says-top-priority-paving-way-freedom-road/>
- ⁴ <http://www.cbc.ca/m/news/topstories/new-hope-for-clean-water-at-shoal-lake-40-first-nation-1.2931092>
- ⁵ <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/ontario-first-nation-says-no-to-trans-canada-highway-plan-1.2960935>
- ⁶ <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/shoal-lake-40-rallies-for-highway-link-to-first-nation-285182331.html>
- ⁷ <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/boil-water-advisory-gotta-learn-to-live-with-it-fn-chief-says-1.2935296>
- ⁸ <http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/winnipeg-area-first-nation-remains-under-17-year-boil-water-advisory-1.2215763>
- ⁹ <https://ca.news.yahoo.com/blogs/dailybrew/winnipeg-water-scare-pales-compared-to-first-213840285.html>
- ¹⁰ <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/group-uses-winnipeg-boil-water-advisory-to-highlight-first-nation-water-woes/>
- ¹¹ <http://www.torontosun.com/2011/09/09/shoal-lake-ready-to-turn-off-the-taps>
- ¹² <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/first-nation-vows-water-fight-129360008.html>

¹³ <http://www.kenoradailyminerandnews.com/2014/09/21/shoal-lake-39-womens-group-threatens-to-disrupt-water-flow-to-winnipeg-by-blocking-ash-rapids>

¹⁴ <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/Winnipeg-may-not-have-properly-compensated-bands-for-water-system-commission-281785801.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.davidsuzuki.org/blogs/science-matters/2014/11/clean-drinking-water-should-be-a-human-right-in-canada/>

¹⁶ <http://www.amnesty.ca/blog/justice-almost-within-reach-for-shoal-lake-40-first-nation>

¹⁷ <http://canadians.org/blog/price-water-shoal-lake-40>

¹⁸ <http://idlenomoremanitoba.com/learn/water-shoal-lake-winnipegs-water-source/>

¹⁹

http://www.merx.com/English/SUPPLIER_Menu.Asp?WCE=Show&TAB=1&PORTAL=MERX&State=7&id=319624&src=osr&FED_ONLY=0&ACTION=&rowcount=&lastpage=&MoreResults=&PUBSORT=2&CLOSESORT=0&IS_SME=Y&hcode=XYtFIQDqla51jTm uDRC4fQ%3d%3d

²⁰ <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/budgeted-shoal-lake-bridge-encouraging-295462061.html> (TB CIDMS 656786)