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Plans for Tim's kids camp nixed

Province cites water-quality issue

By **PAUL TURENNE**, SUN MEDIA

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The province has cancelled a plan to build a Tim Hortons kids camp on the shores of a secluded Whiteshell lake.

Manitoba Conservation and the Tim Horton Children's Foundation unveiled a plan earlier this year to build a \$10-million camp for up to 260 kids on Meditation Lake, located a few kilometres east of Big Whiteshell Lake in Whiteshell Provincial Park.

The camp was to be the first development on the lake besides an unserviced picnic area accessible only by footpath. The plan was given a tentative green light by the government, pending some public consultations and further study.

However, the province announced yesterday the camp will not be built at Meditation Lake because Conservation has some water-quality concerns related to high levels of blue-green algae. The decision was also partly due to some backlash at public meetings.

"People wanted to be sure we wouldn't ram in a kids camp without doing our due diligence, and we did that due diligence. We still think there's a place out there for a camp for underprivileged kids," Struthers said, noting his department will continue to work with Tim Hortons to identify another location in the Whiteshell or elsewhere.

The Tim Horton Children's Foundation runs five camps in Canada and a sixth in Kentucky, all for kids from underprivileged backgrounds.

Eric Reder, a campaign director with The Wilderness Committee, said he's pleased with the decision not to build at Meditation Lake.

"It was really about the Manitoba government understanding that Manitobans value their parks," Reder said. "It's a short hike in but there are so many people who appreciate that opportunity, appreciate knowing that we have that."

Reder said there are many other areas of the Whiteshell already developed that would be better suited to the camp.

He also suggested the province perform further water quality studies at Meditation Lake to better understand blue-green algae.

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