

# **INAC Engagement sessions for First Nations drinking Water**

The schedule of sessions for First Nations to present and the Discussion Paper have been released?

Will this bring safe drinking water to First Nations – Not Likely!

And this is why ...

Provincial guidelines are usually more lax than Canada's national drinking water quality guidelines, which are more lax than U.S. and European regulations. For example, Saskatchewan's Guideline for Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) is 1,500 mg/L as opposed to Canada's and the rest of the world's 500 mg/L. For disinfection by-products, trihalomethanes (THMs), Health Canada wanted 50 micrograms/L, but the Provinces thought that was too tough and the guideline is now set to 100 micrograms/L. Arsenic used to be at 50 micrograms/L, it then dropped to 25 micrograms/L and lastly Health Canada wanted to drop it to 5 micrograms/L, but the Provinces balked and it was set to 10 micrograms/L. The Safe Drinking Water Foundation showed in a long scientific review (Kapaj et al. title: Human Health Effects From Chronic Arsenic Poisoning – A Review) that if the community's drinking water contains more than 5 micrograms/L of arsenic community members should be tested for arsenic poisoning. Moreover, Saskatchewan's limit is still at 25 micrograms/L.

1. The federal government has a predetermined agenda to pass the responsibility (and liability) for safe drinking water down to the provinces, as well as to Chiefs and Councilors.
2. The federal government has taken over a year to launch the information on this so called "Action Plan" yet First Nation communities are supposed to come up with a "defence" in 2-4 weeks!
3. This was supposed to be an opportunity for First Nations people to have input and contribute to this federal Action Plan – instead we are given 2 -4 weeks to submit impact assessments? Not possible!
4. Very little or no funds are available for First Nation communities to network, establish a strategy and provide evidence to present at the sessions and voice their position.
5. Canada's drinking water quality "guidelines" are not enforceable by law as are "Regulations" in other countries - read more about this on [www.safewater.org](http://www.safewater.org), go to Resources, Fact Sheets.
6. Canada's First Nations people have a legal right to equally safe drinking water regardless of which province they live in.
7. Safe drinking water is a basic human right, recognized by the United Nations (UN), although Canada refuses to agree on this at the UN.

## So what can you do?

1. Send a representative of your community to the respective engagement sessions
2. Bring bottles of your treated water and invite the federal representatives to drink a glass of it! But, if it isn't safe don't you drink it!
3. Demand what is your right – truly safe drinking water which includes the full complement of the Canadian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines at a very minimum. Because water treatment plants are constructed to last 20 years or so, it is also important that the drinking water meets future Canadian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines. We assume that those guidelines will be as stringent as current U.S. and European regulations.
4. **Reject any consideration for any form of provincial “guidelines” for First Nation’s drinking water.**

SDWF now has a Scientist on staff, John Bertrand is available to answer your questions and offer scientific advice, he can be reached at [scientist@safewater.org](mailto:scientist@safewater.org) or phone 306-934-0389.

Please give a copy of this message to your Chief and Council, and post this message in your band office for everyone to read.



*Hans BP Louis Delor Thomas Missens*  
*M. H. H. M. D. G. R. Robert Pratt*

*Member in spirit, gone but  
never forgotten.*