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Letter of Support for the Safe Drinking Water Foundation (SDWF)

I regularly meet with Aboriginal leaders from communities across Canada and most specifically from Alberta. I listen to the Elders' advice, I hear the concerns of water treatment operators, and I witness firsthand the incredible increase in water related health issues among our people. These issues can best be defined by Al Gore's statement when he accepted the Noble prize in 2007:

"The future is knocking at our door right now. Make no mistake, the next generation will ask us one of two questions. Either they will ask: "What were you thinking; why didn't you act?" Or they will ask instead: "How did you find the moral courage to rise and successfully resolve a crisis that so many said was impossible to solve?"

During the last decade, the Safe Drinking Water Foundation has trained members of the Advanced Aboriginal Water Treatment Team (AAWTT) from communities who had the moral courage to rise and resolve a crisis with their quality of drinking water. Now they can rest assured their people have truly safe drinking water. I have heard the AAWTT members present to Chiefs from all over North America, their message is compelling, their knowledge is great, and their willingness to reach out and help others is evident.

Protection of source waters is the first crucial step to providing safe drinking water, yet we see source waters that are increasingly contaminated, compounding the challenges to the already ineffective water treatment plants in our communities. Our community leaders are desperately seeking the knowledge and wisdom which the AAWTT members and the SDWF research scientists are willing to share. The SDWF is developing a "Community Framework for Safe Drinking Water" which will provide the direction and advice we so urgently seek, to tell us for which compounds to test our source and treated waters and how often to test our waters for these compounds, what treatment systems will be most effective for our source waters and how to negotiate contracts which guarantee drinking water quality which meet WHO standards.

The SDWF also has established education programs which are recognized and endorsed by organizations across North America, in particular one program encourages students to learn how to test their community drinking water and compare their community's drinking water to other communities' water supplies. The students of today are the decision makers of tomorrow; the SDWF is preparing them to make good decisions based on the information they are learning today.

I hope you will share in our support for the SDWF; they are enabling Aboriginal people to learn about water quality and to become responsible for the health of our people.

Sincerely,

George Poitras, B.Admin.
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