

SDWF

Safe Drinking
Water Foundation



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Members of Parliament
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6

Monday, March 16th, 2009

Dear Member of Parliament,

We have mailed you separately a small bottle of drinking water from the Advanced Aboriginal Water Treatment Team. It would be nice if we could do away with bottled water – but too many Canadians do not have safe drinking water from their taps! This water was produced from extremely challenging groundwater at Pasqua First Nation in Saskatchewan. It meets or exceeds all parameters of the most stringent water quality regulations from Canada, USA, Europe and WHO – while leaving the smallest possible environmental footprint and being extremely cost competitive! The EU and the U.S. have regulations (enshrined in law) and are all more stringent than Canada's guidelines (no legal backing) for water quality. For more information visit www.safewater.org – go to Resources -Fact Sheets and scroll down to **“What is the Purpose of Drinking Water Quality Guidelines and Regulations?”**

In fact, the SDWF is advising on water problems world-wide including in India and China. The Government of India is shutting down water treatment plants because of inadequate disinfection. Yet, many communities in Canada cannot properly disinfect their water, but without regulations and without proper implementation of the full Canadian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines everything is “perceived” to be fine. Not so in India where its government have admitted that more than 270,000 water treatment plants fail to produce safe drinking water.

Over 300 million people in Europe have water quality regulations, more than 300 million people in the United States also enjoy life knowing their drinking water is regulated by legally enforceable regulations. While here in Canada we only have national guidelines for our First Nations people and other Canadians are subjected to even more lax provincial guidelines with some exceptions.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) is presently conducting so-called “engagement sessions” for First Nations Drinking Water. We, the Advanced Aboriginal Water Treatment Team (AAWTT) trained by SDWF scientists in all aspects of water treatment and quality, believe INAC has an agenda to download their fiduciary responsibility to provide safe drinking water to First Nations, as they are using the “engagement sessions” to “sell” provincial guidelines to our people.

Attending the engagement session in Saskatoon and Edmonton confirmed the lack of integrity of the federal government's approach to dealing with water quality on First

Nation reserves. The inclusion of fine print in contribution agreements; inadequate notice for the sessions; once couched as consultations and then re-modeled as engagement sessions; stacking the deck at sessions; and defaulting to games of jurisdictional football between federal and provincial levels of government must no longer be the path taken to solve such a serious issue as access to safe drinking water. Our people have not been given an opportunity for meaningful consultation in this process, which is our inherent right. As INAC is not sharing truthful and unbiased information in these sessions the participants cannot be expected to arrive at the best decisions for our people.

You should be aware that submissions have been made to the United Nations on this very issue of the “duty to consult”, in September 2008 a submission was made to the HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, UNDER CHIEF ALLAN ADAM ATHABASCA CHIPEWYAN FIRST NATION:

“The Canadian Government opposed the Draft Declaration of Indigenous Peoples’ Rights. The Prime Minister claimed that the Declaration is not applicable in Canada. However, this claim has no legal basis and is unprecedented in Canada’s foreign and domestic policy. On Tuesday, April 8, the House of Commons passed a resolution to endorse the Declaration as adopted by the UN and calling on Parliament and the Government of Canada to “fully implement the standards contained therein.”

“The Crown in right of Canada and Alberta has failed to live up to its Constitutional and domestic legal standards” and “Canada is therefore in breach of Treaty, breach of its own constitution and in breach of various International instruments in the following ways: ...”

This and many other pertinent reports generated in the past five years with respect to First Nation water quality are posted on our website. The Expert Panel had this to say about provincial water quality guidelines:

[Expert Panel Report, volume 1, page 55](#)

“Provincial standards are not uniform across the country, and the existing regimes are seriously at different stages of completeness, quality and modernity, as they are mostly the products of historic accretion rather than systemic design”.

As you read this letter, INAC is continuing to contract engineers, when both the INAC representative and the engineer know very well that the water treatment system they are being contracted to provide cannot produce safe drinking water. This is blatant misuse of taxpayer dollars.

Health Canada (HC) continues to routinely monitor only a small subset of the 56 health parameters in the Canadian drinking water quality guidelines. While the number of communities on Boil Water Advisories (BWAs) is alarming, it is far more disconcerting that SDWF scientists estimate the majority of First Nation communities **should** be on Boil Water Advisories but are not, due to HC’s inadequate monitoring. To quote the voluntary Executive Director of the SDWF: ***“If there is ever a full inquiry into the distribution of funds to First Nation communities by INAC, the ineffective water treatment plants that are constantly being commissioned and the inadequate water quality monitoring by Health Canada, then the sponsorship scandal will pale by comparison”.***

There are many implications of unsafe drinking water, one of them is liability. As an elected official, Canadians expect that you will exercise good judgment and take appropriate action on matters such as this. We have kept you informed regularly with articles concerning these issues. It is your responsibility to practice due diligence, now that you know some of the problems it is up to you to delve further to uncover the full extent of the problems, to learn how to protect the health of Canadians and take appropriate action

to ensure ALL Canadians have truly safe drinking water. **Will you practice due diligence on World Water Day, March 22nd and thereafter? On March 22nd we will release SDWF's complete report: "A Review of the Engagement Sessions for the Federal Action Plan on Safe Drinking Water for First Nations: Position Statement" – we encourage you to read every word to fully understand the implications and our recommended solutions.**

If you would like to communicate directly with the AAWTT please contact Tony Steinhauer, Water keeper at Saddle Lake Cree Nation (presently Centre for Disease Creation soon to be the Centre for Disease prevention), ph: 780-614-0916 or e-mail: projheal@telusplanet.net. To coordinate any other possible action on this issue please contact Sue Peterson volunteer administrator of SDWF at 306-867-8067 or e-mail: sue.peterson1@yahoo.com

Please take note that our position on this very critical issue is also supported by the following:

Maude Barlow, Water Advisor to the United Nations and Executive Director for the Council of Canadians
ph: 613-233-4487 ext 249

Tom Goldtooth, Executive Director, Indigenous Environmental Network USA 218-751-4967

Tony Clarke, Executive Director, Polaris Institute and

Karl Flecker, Volunteer Director Water Program, Polaris Institute 613-614-7065

Celeste Côté, National Water Campaigner, Sierra Club Canada 613-241-4611 ext 233

We look forward to any possible opportunity to help you exercise your due diligence, we have world renowned experts who can advise on the many of the unacceptable situations, we are doing our very best to do our part, we could achieve much more working together than we can each achieve working alone.



Hans B. ... Louis Delor ... Thomas Missens ...
M.A.H. Robert Platt
J.C.L.P. *Member in spirit, gone but never forgotten.*

cc.

Maude Barlow, Water Advisor to the United Nations and Executive Director, Council of Canadians

Tom Goldtooth, Executive Director, Indigenous Environmental Network USA

Tony Clarke, Executive Director, and Karl Flecker, Volunteer Director Water Program, Polaris Institute

Celeste Côté, National Water Campaigner, Sierra Club Canada

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