

Ministre des Affaires indiennes et  
du Nord canadien et interlocuteur fédéral  
auprès des Métis et des Indiens non inscrits



Minister of Indian Affairs and  
Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor  
for Métis and Non-Status Indians

Ottawa, Canada K1A 0H4

APR 24 2007

Ms. Sue Peterson  
Volunteer Administrator  
Safe Drinking Water Foundation  
912 Idylwyld Drive North  
SASKATOON SK S7N 3H5

Dear Ms. Peterson:

This is in response to your letter of January 19, 2007, a copy of which was forwarded to me by my colleague, Lynne Yelich, Member of Parliament, concerning the Panel on Drinking Water for First Nations.

I am pleased to hear that you and your organization have taken a number of initiatives in an effort to take on the challenges of providing safe drinking water for First Nations reserves. I am especially impressed by the work you are doing through the Advanced Aboriginal Water Treatment Team and the partnership you have created with the Ontario Society of Engineers to create a position of Ombudsman to oversee water project teams on First Nations reserves in Saskatchewan.

On March 21, 2006, soon after I became Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, I announced a Plan of Action for Safe Drinking Water in First Nation communities. The purpose of this plan was to address recommendations made by the Federal Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development and to address deficiencies identified in First Nations communal water systems.

We have taken decisive action to ensure that all First Nations have access to safe, clean drinking water, and on March 22, 2007, I tabled in Parliament a second progress report showing the following results:

- In March 2006, 193 high-risk drinking water systems were identified; that number has been reduced to 97 in the past 12 months;

.../2

- In March 2006, 21 communities were identified as priorities; seven of these have been removed from that category, notably Woodstock New Brunswick, Constance Lake Ontario, Ochiichagwe'bibigo-ining Ontario, Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Ontario, Driftpile Alberta, Shuswap British Columbia, and Taku River Tlingit British Columbia;
- The *Protocol for Safe Drinking Water in First Nation Communities* was issued and put into effect;
- 875 water and wastewater operators have received ongoing training through the Circuit Rider Training Program and all operators now have access to 24-hour support hotlines; and
- An Expert Panel has provided a report on options for a regulatory regime.

As part of the government's continuing action toward improving access to safe drinking water on First Nations, I also intend to put in place a regulatory regime for safe drinking water standards on reserve. The purpose of this regulatory regime will be to ensure that all First Nations have access to safe drinking water. Budget 2007 includes a commitment to develop this new regulatory regime, specifically mentioning that this regime will oversee water quality on reserve based on the options identified in the report of the expert panel on Safe Drinking Water for First Nations.

The Government of Canada is, and will continue to be committed to working with First Nations in the provision of safe, clean and reliable drinking water.

I also appreciate the initiatives that you and your colleagues have undertaken at the Safe Drinking Water Foundation and I would be pleased to be kept informed of your continuing efforts.

Sincerely,



The Honourable Jim Prentice, PC, QC, MP

c.c.: Lynne Yelich, MP