

Monday October 29th 2007

The Safe Drinking Water Foundation is a national registered charitable organization. Its primary purpose is to develop treatment and preventative solutions to make surface and ground water safe for human consumption. Our mission is three fold. We seek to:

- *Promote safe drinking water through supporting innovative research and development;*
- *Increase awareness of health concerns from consumption of poor quality water;*
- *Act as a catalyst to ensure that appropriate action is taken to enable the provision of safe drinking water to rural residents .*

There has been much talk in the news of late about the environment and all parties have put forth various initiatives that are aimed at addressing the concerns held by Saskatchewan's citizens. One facet of this talk that has been largely absent is how the parties intend to make safe drinking water a reality for all of this province's citizens. The most conspicuous lack of safe drinking water occurs in rural and First Nations communities. Although we understand that reserve infrastructure falls under federal jurisdiction, appendix K of INAC's Protocol for Safe Drinking Water in First Nations Communities cites the provinces as a partner, "Responsible for standards, certification, training, and watershed plan." We at the Safe Drinking Water Foundation are interested in knowing how your party intends to fulfill this responsibility to Saskatchewan's First Nations. This Spring, Canada's Conservative Government chose to rescind the ability for First Nation's leaders and communities to sue the federal for problems with water on reserves under the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Health Canada Contribution Agreements. The related health costs of unsafe drinking water on reserve are then handed down to the provinces. What will your party do to stand up for the First Nations and for the province?

Rural communities draw their water from untreated wells, surface or ground water sources. Many people are simply not aware of the dangers to their health from drinking untreated or ineffectively treated water. The health costs of unsafe drinking water are, as with on reserve water, paid by our already overtaxed provincial health care system. SK has the country's highest levels of Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) in the provincial guidelines, at 1500 mg/L in SK compared to 500 elsewhere in Canada, and Europe and USA. Associated with high TDS are a lot of other problems, such as high hardness, manganese, sometimes arsenic, ammonium and other compounds being problematic in drinking water. In fact when examining treated water quality in communities across Saskatchewan we have found that we have some of the poorest distributed water in Canada. SDWF scientists realize the TDS level is maintained simply because the majority of rural community drinking water treatment systems

are incapable of reducing it. We are interested in knowing how your party proposes to make rural water safe for Saskatchewan's citizens, one third of who are rural residents.

Rural people with whom I have spoken are concerned about the cost of testing and treating their water sources. Scientists agree, water is not constant and it is impossible to test the way to safe drinking water, the only answer is to implement systems that can effectively and consistently remove all potential problems from the source waters and then conduct testing to ensure that the system is effective to produce truly safe drinking water. We want to know how your party plans to implement effective water treatment systems, and how you intend to make water testing accessible for Saskatchewan's rural residents. We will then post your response on our website which receives over 150,000 visitors each month. Thank you, we hope to hear your response to our questions soon.

Sincerely,

Nicole Biederbeck
Program Coordinator
SDWF