



ALBERTA
ENVIRONMENT

*Office of the Minister
MLA, Medicine Hat*

AR 34204

January 14, 2009

Mr. Hans Peterson
Safe Drinking Water Foundation
1, 912 Idylwyld Drive North
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7L 0Z6

Dear Mr. Peterson

Thank you for your letter dated December 10, 2008, regarding development of Alberta's oil sands and the availability of safe drinking water in Aboriginal communities.

One of the Government of Alberta's top priorities is to ensure Albertans have the quantity and quality of water they need now and in the future. The goals of *Water for Life: Alberta's Strategy for Sustainability* reflect this commitment.

Alberta Environment ensures safe, high quality treated drinking water is available for Albertans, including residents of Fort Chipewyan. Municipal drinking water in communities downstream from oil sands developments is treated and routinely tested and shown to be safe. The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo operates the water treatment plant providing treated water to most residents in the Fort Chipewyan area. Reports provided to my Ministry, as required in operating approvals, show the treated water meets the standards set by Alberta Environment.

With respect to environmental impacts from oil sands development, Alberta's regulations, policies and continually-evolving industry best practices preserve the environment and minimize industry's impact on the landscape and people. Through Alberta's *Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act*, strict limits are placed on pollutant releases for both air and water. Alberta Environment continually monitors the river to ensure water quality is not compromised for communities downstream.

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Alberta Environment continues to develop a research and monitoring program to more fully address the sources of contaminants in the oil sands with a commitment to a comprehensive study of contaminants in the lower Athabasca region.

The health of those living in the oil sands region and the ecosystem are of paramount importance to the Government of Alberta. We rely on scientific testing and environmental monitoring to ensure the safety of all residents living near oil sands development. Alberta Health and Wellness, in collaboration with the Alberta Cancer Board, recently conducted a health assessment of the population in Fort Chipewyan. Results were presented in Fort Chipewyan in July 2006, and showed no evidence of increased rates of concern in Fort Chipewyan residents. Alberta Health and Wellness and Alberta Environment will continue to work with the people of Fort Chipewyan to address their health and environmental questions.

Alberta Health and Wellness has also conducted several studies on the potential exposure to contaminants from country foods and concluded that concentrations in these foods are consistent with concentrations outside the oil sands region.

Alberta recognizes climate change is real and that progressive, immediate action is required to effectively respond to this important issue. The Government of Alberta remains committed to doing its fair share to reduce emissions, while at the same time ensuring efforts are practical, achievable and allow for continued economic prosperity in the province.

Alberta was the first jurisdiction in Canada to develop a comprehensive plan to deal with climate change and, in July 2007, became the first in North America to introduce a regulatory framework that requires large industrial emitters to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

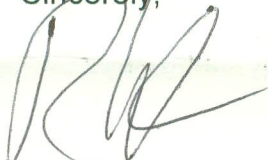
Alberta's 2008 Climate Change Strategy focuses on technological solutions to reduce gas emissions. The new Strategy focuses on three key areas:

- conserving and using energy efficiently;
- greening energy production; and
- implementing carbon capture and storage.

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In support of this strategy, the Government of Alberta recently committed \$4 billion to help accelerate carbon capture and storage and green transportation infrastructure. Our commitment to carbon capture and storage is one of the most significant in the world. The government will continue to work with partners in industry, stakeholders and other governments to put in place technologies to reduce emissions in a manner maintaining the quality of life that Albertans enjoy.

Sincerely,

for 

Rob Renner,
Minister of Environment

c.c. Hon. Mel Knight, Minister of Energy
Hon. Ron Liepert, Minister of Health and Wellness