

Dear Ms Woods,

Mr. Clement wrote a letter to me suggesting that I contact you to discuss water issues in aboriginal communities in Canada. It is unfortunate that Health Canada sees the SDWF as a "problem", when the opposite really should be the case. Despite Health Canada's assertions (around 1997) that HC was working on coming up with treatment plant processes that would solve rural drinking water issues I for one have not seen any of this work or its application. Indeed, at the SDWF we were hoping to get government departments and academia as well as engineering companies to pay attention and be part of the development of better drinking water treatment systems and while this now seems to be happening to some extent we really couldn't wait.

We got heavily involved with aboriginal communities in Canada in 1999 and I volunteered as expert witness to Yellow Quill First Nation. For three years we showed through evaluation of scientific journals and reports, analyzing the Yellow Quill water, and writing our own reports that HC could never lift the boil water advisory at Yellow Quill with the existing water treatment and water source. And, that is using the Canadian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines, which we encourage your department to use (I know you will say that you are, well, if you were truly doing that there would be a lot more plants that simply cannot meet the guidelines). The design specifications for Yellow Quill in the end was to meet not only current but also Future Canadian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines, and I spent 20 months at Yellow Quill working with operators to in the end develop water treatment processes that produce superior quality water. I don't know how much time you have to look at our work, but if you were to read the enclosed articles, and perhaps consult with one of your senior scientists about how "crazy" the SDWF actually is (the scientists involved with SDWF produce a lot of scientific papers and indeed Dr. David Schindler our chairman was the first recipient of the Stockholm Water Prize, and SDWF is now also publishing on its own accord with volunteers).

Indeed, we are currently doing in-plant testing which clearly shows that even using a small fraction of the Canadian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines Health Canada's recommendations for doing some of its testing is flawed. And, while I realize that Health Canada is trying to plug some gaps (including the federal government's inability to properly assess if treatment plants work or not), using people that know a lot about water treatment, such as the Advanced Aboriginal Water Treatment Team, would be a good option. We are really working on increasing the capabilities of aboriginal communities and when Health Canada people come out to these communities they are actually at a disadvantage as the operators in the Advanced Aboriginal Water Treatment Team know an awful lot about water.

We would encourage Health Canada to increase its knowledge and the conference that we are holding in Edmonton is a good start. Last time we had a conference in 2004 Health Canada's Jennifer Mercer attended as a "student" not wanting to show her affiliation to Health Canada. Now I realize that there were more than 200 native people there and many would have had questions for her, but I am hoping that now is the time to start working with aboriginal communities in a better fashion. I do, however, realize that the federal government is declining to support any travel by native people to our conference. This happened last time around as well and we still had more than 200 natives attend despite a lot of negative activity (in addition to declining to support any travel) carried out by federal agencies. Compare that to your officially sanctioned conferences where the operators learn little about safe drinking water but have to attend. Just a brief comment about my government record. I worked for 7 years for Fisheries and Oceans, then 10 years for Saskatchewan Research Council heading up SRC's Drinking Water Quality Section, and then SDWF was given space at Environment Canada's National Hydrology Research Centre for 8 years (and the reason that we were offered space at NHRI was that the then director was concerned that EC scientists needed to work on something that wasn't just academically nice, but were actually useful to people, like poor quality ground and surface water sources on the prairies). Two years ago we were, however, kicked out for speaking out about drinking water. If you look at Canada's non-target pesticide guidelines you may find that my name pops up, also on Metal Mining Regulations, and indeed Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency got me security clearance to work on a joint PMRA-USEPA pesticide initiative (I had prior to that worked with Office of Pesticides in Washington DC), etc. etc. Just to let you know that I actually know all levels of government pretty well.

I am still amazed that federal politicians cannot see the value of doing the right thing, which would pay a lot of political dividends. Indeed, an SDWF volunteer, Dr Simon Kapaj MD was able to get 7,000 pages of Health Canada test data from Saskatchewan, which we have scanned and have been trying to make sense of. You may want to talk to one of your senior HC people in SK, Mr. Tim Bonish, and have him explain to you what we mean when we suggest that Health Canada should invest in rubber boots. SDWF also has volumes of data from other locations, and indeed from municipal rural water systems, many of these also have challenges. And, the "official" view is often quite different from the actual data and actions. Properly addressing drinking water would therefore be of benefit to Canada's provinces as well.

And, developments at Yellow Quill, Pasqua, and George Gordon First Nations where we have continued full-scale piloting are now resulting in great cost savings and with additional work in some other communities we are certain that we are

on the way of not only being able to design water plants that work extremely well, but are also not expensive. In the end there should be no excuse for the continued construction of water treatment processes that don't work. And Health Canada should not need to cover up inappropriate treatment with inadequate testing. We have been invited to write articles for international magazines and I am just hoping that when we do this, one of these days there are a lot of positive developments spearheaded by the federal government. But, in case somebody tells you that pouring money into labs etc. in the big cities is part of the solution you may want to consider that your ability to treat the water effectively rests with what you do within the first five minutes that you pull it out of the ground or pump it out of a lake or river. That is why we had zero technical help from academia and government in Canada to develop the Yellow Quill Groundwater Treatment Process, and why we have had no technical Canadian help for our development of surface water treatment. Your scientists really only have one option, head out to the reservations and spend time there while working with the water plant operators. We have done that since 1999.

Since I mentioned Dr Kapaj's name I also enclose one of his papers (you may just want to read the abstract and conclusions as it is rather long). I would also like you to have a look at a scientific paper (reviewed by many Health Canada people who were unable to find flaws in it and subsequently allowed to be published) that I wrote before Walkerton (PetersonCWWA-2001), the Peterson paper just appeared in Canadian Society of Experimental Biologists and gives a summary of developments with lots of pictures, the Aboriginal Times article was written before the federal government's "Expert Committee" delivered its findings, but really nothing changed so the position is similar. I will separately send you SDWF's latest newsletter and conference details.

I look forward hearing from you.

Kind regards
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