



Assembly of First Nations

Water Stress: Protecting our Communities, our Nation, our World

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www.afn.ca



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The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is the national organization representing First Nations citizens in Canada. The AFN represents all citizens regardless of age, gender or place of residence.

Housing and Infrastructure Directorate advocates on behalf of Canada's First Nations in areas of housing, infrastructure, water, wastewater, emergency issues management, and source water protection.

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FIRST NATIONS AND RIGHT TO WATER

- First Nations have a deep sense of the sacredness and spiritual being of water
- To First Nations, water is to respected through ceremony and practice
- Water cannot be possessed for purposes of sale or restrictive uses
- Water is to be shared freely and protected

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Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act

- Royal assent June 19, 2013
- Came into force November 2013
- Addresses health and safety issues on reserve lands and certain other lands by providing for regulations to govern drinking water and waste water treatment in First Nations communities.
- Regulations could be made on a province-by-province basis to mirror existing provincial regulatory regimes, with adaptations to address the circumstances of First Nations living on those lands

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Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act

- First Nations were not consulted in its development.
- It will create new regulations and standards but does not provide First Nations with any resources to meet those new standards.
- First Nations may then be punished for not meeting these new regulations.
- This is clearly unfair and is dangerous because many First Nations will still suffer from a lack of safe drinking water.



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Risk Analysis - Systems

807 water systems inspected:

- 314 (39%) - high overall risk
- 278 (34%) - medium overall risk
- 215 (27%) - low overall risk.
- **1.5% of the homes (1,880) are reported to have no water service.**



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Risk Analysis – Wastewater Systems

- 72 (14%) - high overall risk
- 272 (51%) - medium overall risk
- 188 (35%) - low overall risk.
- **2% of the homes (1,777) are reported to have no service.**

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Operators

- Only 54% of water systems and 49% of wastewater systems have a fully certified primary operator.
- For water systems approximately 81% of the systems had a backup operator
- for wastewater systems approximately 74% of the systems had a backup operator



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Current situation

- As of Feb 28, 2014, there were 135 drinking water advisories in place in 92 First Nation communities.
- 125 of DWAs are continued advisories
- A 2007 study found that 25% of these DWAs were on longer than one year

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Challenges

- Many First Nations do not have access to technical support
- Problems with recruitment, retention and training
- Not all have access to Circuit Rider Training program,
- Ongoing support from tribal councils and regional technical organizations,
- Recent announcement of funding cuts will limit ability of technical organizations i.e. Tribal Councils to assist
- The obstacle is seen as inadequate resources, not lack of regulation (Expert panel report 2006)

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THANK YOU

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