

## Human Rights or Drinking Water

Yahoo/Inbox

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**proprePNh2o / cleanFNh2o**

**From:**proprepnh2o-cleanfnh2o@sac-isc.gc.ca

**To:**susan.blacklin@yahoo.com

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Fri, Apr 12 at 7:10 AM

Dear Susan Blacklin,

Thank you for your letter of February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024, concerning clean drinking water in First Nation communities. I am responding on behalf of Indigenous Services Canada.

I can assure you that the Department places a high priority on providing safe, clean, and dependable drinking water to First Nation communities. Indigenous Services Canada knows that the state of water and wastewater in some First Nation communities is not acceptable. To guarantee that there is access to safe drinking water for First Nations living on reserves, this must be addressed in full partnership with First Nations.

The Department works with First Nations to make sure that there is safe drinking water in First Nation communities. First Nation communities receive advice and financial support from the Department for their public water and wastewater systems. First Nations provide day-to-day management of their water supply and wastewater treatment systems.

Since 2015, the Department has committed over \$5.6 billion to upgrade water and wastewater infrastructure in First Nation communities. This investment is to improve monitoring, testing, and operations of water systems, and to help end and prevent long-term drinking water advisories. By 2025, annual funding of the operations and maintenance of First Nations water and wastewater systems in First Nation communities will have increased on a permanent basis by almost four times. We invite you to read more on the investments for clean water in First Nations communities at: <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1526995988708/1526996020578#water>.

Drinking water advisories are unique to each situation. Department officials work with each community to find the most appropriate solution. In the end, the

decision to put in place a particular solution is made by the First Nation's leadership. Much work remains, but the results are encouraging.

We invite you to visit these links to learn more about:

- The updated numbers on long-term drinking water advisories: <https://sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1506514143353/1533317130660>.
- The steps to lifting a long-term drinking water advisory: <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1614386700861/1614386717841>.
- The steps to preventing short-term drinking water advisories from becoming long-term: <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1615323167080/1615323218379>.

Public health advice and drinking water quality checks are supported by the Department. Environmental Public Health Officers are responsible for carrying out actions related to protecting public health as well as helping with water quality problems. Please learn more about the Department's role for drinking water monitoring at: <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1562866127080/1562866152629>.

As part of its work with First Nations, the Department also supports water operators. Water operators are essential to clean, safe water in First Nations communities. They are certified professionals who operate regulated water systems. In many First Nations communities, access to a skilled water operator is a challenge. The Department is working with First Nations to train more water operators. To learn more about the Circuit Rider Training Program available to all First Nations communities, please visit: <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1313424571273/1533818103401>.

Since the repeal of the 2013 *Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act* in summer 2022, Indigenous Services Canada has met with many First Nations and First Nation organizations to share information, listen, and work with partners to explore how to address community needs and priorities through new proposed First Nations drinking water and wastewater legislation.

A consultation draft of a legislative proposal was shared with First Nation rights holders, including Modern Treaty and Self-Governing Nations, and First Nation organizations, to support the development of new proposed First Nations drinking water and wastewater legislation. Follow this link to read more on the shared consultation draft: [www.canada.ca/en/indigenous-services-canada/news/2023/03/consultation-draft-shared-next-steps-underway-toward-proposed-new-first-nations-drinking-water-and-wastewater-legislation](http://www.canada.ca/en/indigenous-services-canada/news/2023/03/consultation-draft-shared-next-steps-underway-toward-proposed-new-first-nations-drinking-water-and-wastewater-legislation).

On June 21, 2021, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* was passed and immediately came into force. The Department's work will continue to be guided by the standards of this Declaration. Find more information here: <https://justice.gc.ca/eng/declaration/index.html>.

I appreciate you sharing your thoughts on what reconciliation means to you and what needs to be done. The Government of Canada is committed to move

forward on the path of reconciliation with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples based on the recognition of rights, respect, co-operation, and partnership. Canada continues the important work of responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. While this work is underway, Canada continues to take a recognition of rights approach in engagement with Indigenous peoples. Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982, recognizes and affirms the Aboriginal and treaty rights of First Nations, Inuit and Métis.

Please continue to stay engaged and check progress on these issues. If you would like further information on how the Department is working to improve water and wastewater infrastructure in First Nation communities, please visit the following section of our website: <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1614385724108/1614385746844>.

Sincerely,

Curtis Bergeron  
Director  
Strategic Water Management  
Regional Operations Sector

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