

From OTC Program Area: Technical Services

Prepared by: Aaron Genereux, Engineer

Date: July 18, 2017

First Nations and Safe Drinking Water

The topic of safe drinking water and First Nation is an important one and to this day, many First Nations continue to operate under a Drinking Water Advisory (DWA). The topic of drinking water advisories in First Nation communities is far too common and we do know many of these communities are progressing towards implementation of proper infrastructure to provide Safe Drinking Water. A positive side to this story has been the recent Government of Canada pledged to put an end to the existing long-term boil water advisories. We have seen recent increase in investment towards water related infrastructure but it might not be at the pace one would expect on such an important issue.

First Nations have indicated one of the best ways forward is working together to achieve a common approach to help solve and eventually eliminate the issue of particularly long-standing DWA's. The removal of all the boil water advisories can be considered only a starting point, as First Nation water-related infrastructure needs to be invested appropriately, upgraded in many cases and supported to ensure long-term sustainability.

The David Suzuki Foundation report on progress of First Nations drinking water in Ontario outlines the many complexities of this topic. The report is titled 'Glass Half Empty? Year 1 progress towards resolving drinking water advisories in nine First Nation in Ontario.

The report is available at:

<http://david Suzuki.org/publications/reports/2017/DrinkingWaterAdvisory/>

More recently, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada have opened Engagement Sessions for Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act. Below is the link for further information on upcoming region sessions.

<https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1496056786210/1496056888386>