Plan of Action for Drinking Water in First Nations Communities

Progress Report — March 22, 2007
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Executive Summary

Canada’s New Government has made significant progress in helping First Nations in the provision of drinking water to First Nations on reserve. Since the announcement of the Plan of Action for Safe Drinking Water in First Nations Communities on March 21, 2006, actions undertaken by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Health Canada, and Environment Canada, have achieved the following results:

• In March 2006, 193 high-risk drinking water systems were identified; that number has been reduced to 97 in the past 12 months;
• In March 2006, 21 communities were identified as priorities; seven of these have been removed from that category, notably Woodstock (NB), Constance Lake (ON), Ochiichagwe’bibigo-ining (ON), Wabigoon Lake Ojibway (ON), Driftpile (AB), Shuswap (BC), and Taku River Tlingit (BC);
• the Protocol for Safe Drinking Water in First Nations Communities was issued and put into effect; and
• an Expert Panel has provided a report on options for a regulatory regime.

In addition,

• 875 water and wastewater operators have received on-going training through the Circuit Rider Training Program and all operators now have access to 24-hour support hotlines; and
• In the March 19, 2007 Federal Budget, Canada’s New Government announced there will be new standards to ensure that all First Nations have access to safe drinking water. The Minister is expected to table legislation in the Spring of 2007.

Canada’s New Government is, and will continue to be, committed to helping First Nations in the provision of safe, clean, and reliable drinking water.
Progress on high risk systems in First Nation communities

*A high risk system is defined as a system that has major deficiencies in several aspects. Should a problem arise in one of those areas, the system is unlikely to be able to compensate, thus there is a high probability that any problem could result in unsafe water.

Progress on the 21 priority First Nation communities

*A priority community is defined as a community that had both a high risk system and a Drinking Water Advisory in place at the time of the Minister’s March 2006 announcement.
Background

The Government of Canada is committed to helping First Nations in the provision of safe, clean, and reliable drinking water. To achieve this goal, the Government of Canada provides funding and advice to First Nations to help them in the management and operation of their water systems.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada provides funding assistance for the design, construction, operation and maintenance of water systems. It also provides funding for the training and certification of water system operators.

Health Canada works with First Nations to ensure that drinking water quality monitoring programs are in place in their communities. Environment Canada develops technical guidance and training material on source water protection and sustainable water use.

First Nations are responsible for the daily operations and management of their systems, which includes the design, construction, operation, maintenance, and monitoring of their water systems.

The Plan of Action for Drinking Water

On March 21, 2006, the Minister, along with the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, announced a Plan of Action for Drinking Water in First Nations communities. This action plan examined the multi-barrier approach of the First Nations Water Strategy, and placed added emphasis and action on expanding upon the key points that would have the most impact on reducing the risk ranking of water systems in First Nations communities. In addition, these activities would also address the recommendations made by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development.

Specifically, in the Plan of Action, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada committed to the following activities:

• issuing a clear protocol on water standards;
• ensuring mandatory training and oversight of water systems by certified operators;
• addressing the drinking water concerns of all high risk system, starting with 21 priority communities;
• creating an expert panel that will provide options for a regulatory regime for drinking water on reserve; and
• committing to future reporting on the progress of the Plan of Action.
The department secured $60 million over two years from Budget 2006 to help reach the objectives as set out in the Plan of Action.

This report will show the progress that has been made since the March 21, 2006 announcement through the Plan of Action with respect to helping First Nations in the provision of clean, safe drinking water to their communities.
Progress on the Plan of Action

Canada's New Government has made significant progress in helping First Nations in the provision of drinking water to First Nations on reserve.

In addition to working on the Plan of Action, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada has been advancing in the capital upgrades and construction of new water treatment plants that will meet the standards established in the department’s Protocol for Safe Drinking Water in First Nations Communities. Since last March, eight new water treatment plants have opened across Canada, including those in Eden Valley and Driftpile First Nations in Alberta, Naskapi in Quebec, Akwesasne near Cornwall Ontario, and Kasabonika Lake First Nation, Ochiichagwe'Babigo'Ining First Nation, Cat Lake First Nation, and Chapleau Ojibway First Nations in northwestern Ontario.

The Circuit Rider Training Program has been expanded, and combined with the Safe Water Operations Program, now ensures that all First Nations have access to 24-hour technical support through hotlines and hands-on oversight of water treatment plants by certified professionals. The Circuit Rider Training Program has helped ensured that 875 water and wastewater operators have received on-going training on how to operate their system.

These activities have resulted in the number of high-risk water systems decreasing from 193 systems to 97 systems. More First Nations on reserve now have access to safe drinking water.

Because drinking water advisories are an important preventative measure to protect public health, research conducted by Health Canada determined that the communication of drinking water advisories in First Nations communities must be improved. Based on this research, Health Canada is developing education materials, such as door notices and radio announcements, that will assist First Nations people in making the right decisions to protect their health where drinking water advisories have been issued. These educational materials will be useful tools for Chiefs and Councils when issuing a drinking water advisories when recommended by a Health Canada Environmental Health Officer.

Environment Canada has been providing information on federal requirements related to wastewater effluent quality and environmental protection. Environment Canada has been working to produce several technical guidance products and training materials which will help First Nations take action on source water protection and sustainable water use.

Together, these three departments have also produced, with the help of the Assembly of First Nations and other First Nations organizations, the Water is a Treasure school
kit. The activities in this kit will help increase awareness among First Nations children on the importance of clean and reliable drinking water, and encourage careers in the water sector. *Water is a Treasure* was successfully demonstrated at the Assembly of First Nations Water and Housing Policy Forum in Toronto on February 6 to 8, 2007, and is now being provided to schools with a significant number of First Nations students.

Following are the details on the progress made with the five specific action items of the Plan of Action.

**Issuing a Clear Protocol on Water Standards**

On the date of the announcement of the Plan of Action, the Honourable Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians also released the *Protocol for Safe Drinking Water in First Nations Communities* (available on-line at www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/H2O). This protocol document compiled and clarified the departmental standards for design, construction, operation, maintenance, and monitoring of drinking water systems. This covers all aspects of water systems from source water protection, to the requirement of certified operators, to emergency response plans. It therefore addresses the recommendation to clarify design codes and standards made by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development.

The Protocol took effect immediately upon its release. All new water systems are now being designed and constructed to these standards. In addition, the training of operators is being adjusted to include the operation and maintenance standards of the protocol.

The Protocol included annual performance inspection requirements, which are currently underway. This will help in verifying compliance with the protocol, and ensure that the risk ranking of all systems is as accurate and up-to-date as possible.

Based on advice from First Nations practitioners, a number of improvements are planned for the Protocol. Notable future additions will include Health Canada’s *Procedures for Addressing Drinking Water Advisories*, and Environment Canada’s guidance materials on source water protection plans.

Health Canada has led the development of the procedures for First Nations, Health Canada, and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to follow when issuing and lifting drinking water advisories in order to speed up response time and shorten the duration of advisories. Addressing the underlying causes of a drinking water advisory is a key priority of the Government of Canada, as they are for First Nations communities.

Environment Canada has been developing technical manuals on source water
assessment and community-level water use audits. Many of their manuals have been pilot-tested in First Nations communities.

Therefore, in summary, with respect to progress on the protocol:

• The *Protocol for Safe Drinking Water in First Nations Communities* was issued and put into effect on March 21, 2006.

### Ensuring Oversight of Water Systems by Certified Operators

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada provides funding to First Nations and First Nations technical organizations to support the Circuit Rider Training Program, which is the main vehicle by which most First Nations operators receive the required training to operate their systems. This program provides qualified experts who rotate through a circuit of communities, providing hands-on training for the operators on their own system. Circuit Rider Trainers also help the First Nations with minor troubles and issues of operation and maintenance of their systems.

Through the work of the Circuit Rider Training Program, the number of water treatment system operators who have achieved the first level of certification or greater has increased from 8% of all operators in March 2003 to 37.4% of all operators as of March 20, 2007. This represents 418 out of 1,117 water system operators and back-up operators across the country.

Since the announcement of the Plan of Action, work has been underway to strengthen the Circuit Rider Training Program. First, the program is being expanded to ensure that it will be available to all First Nations. Second, training is being adapted to ensure that not only are the operators being trained to operate their system, but also to achieve certification under provincial regimes. The training will also adhere to the *Protocol for Safe Drinking Water in First Nations Communities*. Finally, the Circuit Rider Training Program will be coordinated with operational oversight of the systems. In addition, the various regional Circuit Rider Trainers have established a communication network, allowing them to share best practices amongst each other.

The main expansion created by the Plan of Action beyond the original scope of the seven-point strategy is to ensure oversight of water systems by certified operators (i.e., by service providers who are qualified in a manner consistent with the applicable standards). This new focus of activities will have a significant impact on reducing the risk ranking of water systems, as it will accomplish several objectives.

First of all, oversight will provide additional technical support to the operator and First Nation. The qualified oversight operator will be available to help the First Nations when
issues or emergencies arise. Second, the oversight operator will be able to help in the training of the operator. An oversight operator will be on-site much more frequently than the usual Circuit Rider Trainer, and can therefore provide more support in the way of training and local capacity building. Finally, the oversight operator can help ensure that the proper operation and maintenance procedures are followed. This will help both in ensuring clean, safe drinking water is produced by the system, and in maintaining the system in order for it to last its intended lifecycle. As such, oversight will help address risk ranking issues related to the operation of the system, to the training of the operator, and to monitoring and record keeping, and is thus likely to have the most significant impact on lowering the risk-ranking of the system.

Through a combination of contracting service providers and increasing the capacity of the Circuit Rider Training Program, as a first step to adding operational oversight, a hotline for technical support and assistance has been implemented. This means that oversight experts are available to immediately go on-site in the community to address emergency situations. This 24-hour emergency call line has been available to all First Nations since December 28, 2006.

The second phase of implementing oversight will include monitoring of systems and the occasional visit of the oversight operator to evaluate the performance and progress of the operator where such supervision is deemed necessary. This will include, where needed, the installation of remote monitoring equipment and the periodic review of the operator’s logs and records. The frequency of assessments on performance will depend on the training and certification of the operator, and the results of previous assessment reports. Some regions have implemented this phase already, as the local Circuit Rider Trainers or First Nations technical organizations have accepted to take on this additional responsibility. Other regions are examining options on how best to implement this level of oversight. The second phase of oversight is expected to be in place in the communities that require such assistance by March 2008.

In some cases, oversight will include full operational control of the system by a qualified service provider who will provide the oversight operator. This level of oversight will only be implemented where the local First Nations operator has not achieved certification and where significant operational issues have been identified in assessment reports. This arm’s length service provider will be hired through a contract between the First Nations and the oversight service provider, with the roles and responsibilities of each party clearly defined. This highest level of oversight is being implemented through the Safe Water Operations Program developed by the Ontario region. It includes full-time, on site supervision by the certified operator, which will help ensure proper operations of the facility as well as enhance the training of the local operator and thereby support local capacity building. The highest level of oversight is now in place in eight First Nations communities that are the most in need of such support. Several other communities are also in various stages of implementing the Safe Water Operations
Program, from letters of interests to services providers to finalizing the contracts. It is expected to take several months to hire the qualified service providers for all of the communities in need.

Therefore, in summary, with respect to progress on oversight:

- a 24-hour hotline and emergency support is available to all First Nations as of December 2006;
- the expansion of Circuit Rider Training Program is underway;
- frequent assessments by oversight operators will be in place in 2007-08; and
- eight of the communities the most in need have arms-length service providers in through the Safe Water Operations Program; it will take several months before all of the communities in need are covered.

Address All High-Risk System, Starting With 21 Priority Communities

As indicated previously, the main, but not the only, objective of the Plan of Action is to address all systems identified as high-risk, thereby helping to ensure safe drinking water in First Nations communities. Reducing the risk level of a water system can be accomplished by addressing the deficiencies at any of the barriers, notably at the source water, the design of the system, the operation of the system, the training of the operator, and the monitoring and record keeping related to the system.

In March 2006, there were 193 identified high-risk systems. From these, the Minister identified 21 communities which would be a priority for the department. Today, there remains only 97 high-risk systems from the original 193 systems of one year ago. In addition, 7 of the 21 priority communities have been addressed by either having their drinking water advisories lifted and/or the risk level of their water systems reduced, notably Woodstock (NB), Constance Lake (ON), Ochiichagwe’bíibigo’-ning (ON), Wabigoon Lake Ojibway (ON), Driftpile (AB), Shuswap (BC), and Taku River Tlingit (BC). We are continuing to work with the remaining 14 priority communities to address the remaining issues. The detailed progress for each of the 21 priority communities can be found in Appendix A.

The priority communities were identified as the first communities to address because not only did they have high-risk water systems with several deficiencies, but they also had drinking water advisories at that time of the Minister’s announcement.

Remedial action plans have been created for each of the remaining high-risk systems and priority communities. These remedial plans are developed and implemented by the First Nations, with appropriate help from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada technical
experts, Circuit Rider Trainers, and Health Canada’s Environmental Health Officers (who review and interpret drinking water quality data), as required.

As previously mentioned, the 21 priority communities were only the first to have remedial plans implemented out of all of the communities with either high-risk systems or drinking water advisories. In March 2006, there were an additional 149 First Nations communities beyond the 21 priority communities that also had one or more high-risk community drinking water systems. There were also another 54 communities that had one or more drinking water advisories. In all, this meant that there were a total of 224 First Nations communities that had water issues that needed to be addressed.

Work has progressed very well for many of these communities. As of March 20, 2007, there are 121 First Nations communities that still have water issues that need to be addressed. Out of these, 56 communities have one or more high-risk community drinking water systems, 36 communities have one or more drinking water advisories, and 29 communities have both one or more high-risk systems and one or more drinking water advisories. Remedial plans have been developed for each of these communities, and currently vary in implementation from design phase to nearly completed.

It should be noted that there are additional First Nations communities that have drinking water advisories on private systems or commercial buildings. These drinking water advisories have not been counted in the statistics presented above, as the department only provides funding and assistance for communal systems.

Therefore, in summary, with respect to progress on risk-levels and priority communities:

- there are currently 97 high-risk community drinking water systems; this is down from the 193 high-risk systems at the time of the announcement;
- seven of the 21 priority communities have been addressed by either having their drinking water advisories lifted and/or the risk level of their water systems reduced, notably Woodstock (NB), Constance Lake (ON), Ochiichagwe’bibigo’ning (ON), Wabigoon Lake Ojibway (ON), Driftpile (AB), Shuswap (BC), and Taku River Tlingit (BC); and,
- there are 121 communities that still have high-risk community drinking water systems and/or drinking water advisories to be addressed; this is down from the 224 communities (which includes the 21 priority communities) at the time of the announcement.

Creating an Expert Panel to Provide Options for a Regulatory Regime

On May 31, 2006, the Minister, along with the National Chief of the Assembly of First
Nations, the Minister of Health and the Minister of Environment announced the creation of a panel of experts that would examine and provide options on the establishment of a regulatory framework to ensure safe drinking water in First Nations communities.

The panel was composed of three highly experienced and qualified individuals. The Panel was chaired by Harry Swain, a former Deputy Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Mr. Swain also chaired the research advisory panel of the Walkerton Inquiry and an expert panel on a water and wastewater strategy for Ontario. The other members of the panel were Grand Chief Stan Louttit and Dr. Steve Hrudey. Mr. Louttit is Grand Chief of the Mushkegowuk Council. Dr. Hrudey is a Professor of Environmental Health Sciences and Associate Dean of Canada’s first School of Public Health, at the University of Alberta.

The scope of the panel's work was to:

- engage First Nations and non-First Nations stakeholders and gather information and suggestions, through public hearings and written submissions;
- review examples of regulatory frameworks and regimes from other jurisdictions and countries; and
- draft a paper for the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs that would:
  - examine options for a regulatory framework;
  - analyse the benefits and drawbacks of each option;
  - indicate issues outside the mandate of the Panel that would have to be addressed to implement the option; and
  - provide a comparative analysis of all options.

The Expert Panel held public hearings across Canada from June to August, 2006. Hearings were held in Whitehorse, Edmonton, Vancouver, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, Toronto, Québec City, Halifax and Thunder Bay. The panel heard from more than 110 invited presenters and comprised representatives from:

- 39 individual First Nations communities;
- 31 First Nations organizations, including tribal councils, regional councils, technical services associations, environmental and health organizations, and Assembly of First Nations regional offices;
- the three federal departments most closely involved in funding and overseeing water and wastewater systems on reserves - Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Health Canada and Environment Canada;
- provincial and territorial ministries with responsibility for drinking water standards and, in some cases, source water protection;
- private sector organizations with in-depth experience in the First Nations water sector; and
- non-governmental organizations with particular expertise in public health,
environmental or legal issues relevant to our mandate.

The panel submitted its final report to the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada on November 15, 2006. The final report was tabled in the House of Commons on December 7, 2006.

The advisory group established by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (members from the Assembly of First Nations, Health Canada and Environment Canada) provided to the Minister a comprehensive analysis in December 2006 as to how the regulatory options put forward by the Panel affect First Nations communities as well as these government departments involved in funding and overseeing water and wastewater systems on reserves – specifically Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Health Canada and Environment Canada. The Minister is currently considering the regulatory options proposed in the final report.

The Minister has discussed the regulatory options proposed in the report with the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations. The Minister will propose a regulatory framework that will ensure safe drinking water in First Nations communities in the Spring 2007. In doing so, the Minister will continue to engage with First Nations, federal, provincial and territorial governments to ensure that an appropriate regulatory framework is put in place.

Therefore, in summary, with respect to progress on a regulatory framework for safe drinking water in First Nations communities:

- the Expert Panel held hearings across Canada during July-August 2006 and heard from over 100 First Nations and non-First Nations presenters;
- the Minister received final report from the Expert Panel in November, 2006;
- the Minister reviewed the Expert Panel report and is now considering the proposed regulatory options; and
- the Minister will choose a regulatory option and propose an appropriate regulatory framework that will ensure safe drinking water in First Nations communities in the Spring 2007.

Report on Progress

The last commitment was to report on the progress made in water strategy. These continuous progress reports directly addresses the final recommendation of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development to provide reports on progress to Parliament.

The first progress report was tabled to Parliament on December 7, 2006. This document
Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

is the second report on the Plan of Action for Drinking Water in First Nations Communities. Further reports will continue to highlight progress.

This report can be found on the department’s water web site at www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/H2O.
Conclusion

In conclusion, progress has indeed been made through the government’s new Plan of Action on Drinking Water in First Nations Communities. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, in collaboration with Health Canada, Environment Canada, and First Nations, has made advances in all five items of the Plan of Action, and has likewise begun to address all of the recommendations made by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development.

The Government of Canada has developed a plan, and is moving forward on that plan with measurable results:

• there has been a significant decrease in the number of First Nations communities with high-risk communal water systems and/or drinking water advisories; and
• an Expert Panel has provided options for a regulatory regime to help the Minister choose an appropriate regulatory framework for drinking water in First Nations communities.

The Government of Canada is, and will continue to be, committed to helping First Nations in the provision of safe, clean, and reliable drinking water.
Appendix A

21 Priority Communities Progress Report

Atlantic

Pabineau
Pabineau, with a registered population of 227 people, 87 on reserve, is situated about 10 kilometres from Bathurst, New Brunswick. Its water problems date back to June 1, 2005 when a Drinking Water Advisory was put in place because of equipment malfunction which resulted in inadequate chlorination. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the system in 2006 and determined that it was poorly designed.

Progress to date: On September 14, 2006, an agreement was reached between the Chief and Council and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to install temporary individual treatment systems for each home and work towards the final solution of connecting to the municipal system of the town of Bathurst. It is expected that the installation of individual household treatment systems will be complete by early spring 2007. A request for a Proposal for the design work has been issued to explore the possibility of connecting to the Bathurst municipal system as a long-term solution.

Woodstock
Woodstock, with a registered population of 813 people, 260 on reserve, is situated about five kilometres south of Woodstock, New Brunswick. Its water problems date back to March 1, 2005 when a Drinking Water Advisory was put in place because of inadequate chlorination resulting in unacceptable microbiological levels.

Progress to date: The risk level for this community has been reduced from high to medium due to the work that has been done over the course of the year. Houses in the community are not under a Drinking Water Advisory. There is a Drinking Water Advisory on a gas station and a health centre, due to contaminated wells. These buildings are being connected to the community distribution system and one of the affected wells has been closed. This work is expected to be complete by June 2007. In addition, the operator has achieved certification to the level of the plant.

Quebec

Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg
Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg, with a registered population of 2,671 people, 1,489 on reserve, is situated about 130 kilometres north of Gatineau/Ottawa, adjacent to the town of Maniwaki. Its water problems date back to 1999. There are two separate issues relating to water:

Some residents are connected to the community distribution system of Maniwaki through a municipal service agreement. The municipal system draws water from surface water, and has had issues with treating water to acceptable drinking water standards.

The remaining residents are on individual wells and have been on a Drinking Water Advisory since 1999 because of an unacceptable level of uranium in the groundwater. This year Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated technical solutions for treatment directly at the wells but found that current technologies are not viable because they cause unacceptable levels of radon gas.

**Progress to date:** The Municipality of Maniwaki started recent upgrades on its water system Aug. 30, 2006, to address treatment issues. It anticipates upgrades will be completed by December 2007. Over the next five years Kitigan Zibi, in collaboration with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, will expand the distribution system to connect as many residents and community buildings as possible, currently on individual wells, to the municipal system. It is expected that in the meantime the Drinking Water Advisory will remain in place for these homes and they will be provided with bottled water for drinking. A technical meeting was held on March 6, 2007, between Kitigan Zibi and Indian Northern Affairs Canada to establish a global action plan which will cover not only the units that will be connected to the municipal system but also those that will remain on individual systems.

**Ontario**

Shoal Lake #40
Shoal Lake #40, with a registered population of 526 people, 254 on reserve, is situated near Kejick. Its water problems date back to Dec. 6, 2000 when a Drinking Water Advisory was put in place because of equipment malfunction resulting in inadequate chlorination. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the existing facilities and found that there have been problems with consistent operations dating back to 2000. Work started on May 5, 2003, when a project was initiated to construct a new water treatment plant which will meet current regulations.

**Progress to date:** A consultant is being selected to re-design the new water treatment plant. The design is scheduled to be complete in December 2007 with construction
beginning in the spring of 2008. Certified oversight, which would result in a lower risk ranking for the community, has been offered to the First Nation. However, the First Nation has not responded. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada also held a work shop concerning certified oversight for all First Nations in the Bimose Tribal Council, which includes Shoal Lake #40, and representatives of the First Nation did not attend.

Constance Lake
Constance Lake, with a registered population of 1,449 people, 711 on reserve, is situated about 40 kilometres northwest of Hearst. Its water problems date back to Nov. 18, 2005 when a Drinking Water Advisory was put in place because of equipment malfunction. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the plant and found the necessary operation and maintenance work was not being done.

**Progress to date:** The risk level for this community has been reduced from high to medium due to the work that has been done over the course of the year. Work began in May 2006 when a contract with the Ontario Clean Water Agency was signed to provide certified oversight. The Drinking Water Advisory was lifted July 2006.

Moose Deer Point
Moose Deer Point, with a registered population of 449 people, 143 on reserve, is situated on the O'Donnell Point peninsula in Georgian Bay north of Muskoka. Its water problems date back to 1998 when a Drinking Water Advisory was put in place because of significant deterioration in the source water quality as well as inadequate chlorination. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the system and found that the necessary operation and maintenance work was not being done, and the pump houses were substandard.

**Progress to date:** An interim upgrade of the system has been approved and it is expected that the work will be completed by April 2007. The First Nation has also applied for Ontario Region’s Safe Water Operations Program for funding for the oversight assistance which we expect to be approved in April 2007. It is expected that the Drinking Water Advisory will continue until the water system is fully compliant with the current drinking water regulations and standards. The construction of the new system is expected to be completed by March 2010.

Northwest Angle No. 37
Northwest Angle No. 37, with a registered population of 336 people, 153 on reserve, is situated southeast of Kenora. Its water problems date back to 2002 when a Drinking Water Advisory was put in place because of inadequate chlorination. This year, Indian
and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the system and found that the chlorinator was malfunctioning, and there were problems with operation and maintenance work.

*Progress to date:* Certified oversight, which would result in a lower risk ranking for the community, has been offered to the First Nation. However, the First Nation is only interested in participating if Indian and Northern Affairs Canada will support a proposal that will involve the Tribal Council. To date, no proposal has been received. The Drinking Water Advisory is still in place due to a lack of chlorination. New parts have been ordered for the water treatment plant. Once installed, the plant will be able to chlorinate the water and the Drinking Water Advisory should be lifted.

**Ochiichagwe'babigo-ining**
Ochiichagwe'babigo-ining, with a registered population of 329 people, 109 on reserve, is situated north of Kenora. Its water problems date back to 2004 when a Drinking Water Advisory was put in place because of equipment malfunction. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the system and found that the necessary operation and maintenance work was not being done. Work started in 2002 and continues to the present date.

*Progress to date:* The risk level for this community has been reduced from high to low due to the work that has been done over the course of the year. A new water treatment plant was opened in November 2006, and the Drinking Water Advisory was lifted in March, but reinstated Sept. 9, 2006. This second Drinking Water Advisory was precautionary, caused by disruption of disinfection during commissioning of the new plant. Certified oversight is now in place, and the Drinking Water Advisory has been lifted.

**Kingfisher**
Kingfisher, with a registered population of 461 people, 429 on reserve, is situated about 500 kilometres north of Thunder Bay. Its water problems date back to 2004 when a Drinking Water Advisory was put in place because of equipment malfunction resulting in inadequate chlorination. The water system has been evaluated and it was found that the necessary operation and maintenance work was not being done.

*Progress to date:* Work started on Aug. 9, 2005 and continues with an upgrade to the water treatment plant due to begin in the spring of 2007. The First Nation's Tribal Council is preparing a proposal to deliver certified oversight for their First Nations. It is expected that certified oversight will result in a lower risk ranking and the removal of the Drinking Water Advisory.
Muskrat Dam Lake
Muskrat Dam Lake, with a registered population of 367 people, 213 on reserve, is situated in the Sioux Lookout District on the western shore of the Severn River. Its water problems date back to 2003 when a Drinking Water Advisory was put in place because of inadequate chlorination and a high turbidity. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the system and found that the necessary operation and maintenance work was not being done.

Progress to date: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada has been working closely with the First Nation on the construction of a piped sewer and water system that will result in all of the community being connected to a piped system. A diesel station upgrade project is also underway to ensure the provision of a safe and reliable electrical supply. It is expected that certified oversight would result in a lower risk ranking and the removal of the Drinking Water Advisory. However, the First Nation has decided not to apply for the Safe Water Operations Program, which would provide certified oversight.

Wabigoon Lake Ojibway
Wabigoon Lake Ojibway, with a registered population of 530 people, 153 on reserve, is situated east of Dryden. Its water problems date back to September 2005 when a Drinking Water Advisory was put in place because of equipment malfunction resulting in inadequate chlorination as well as high turbidity. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the system and found that the necessary operation and maintenance work was not being done.

Progress to date: Work started October 2005 and continues to the present date. The Drinking Water Advisory was lifted in July 2006. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada has offered to provide funding for certified oversight of water operations. It is expected that the implementation of oversight will result in a lower risk ranking.

Alberta

Dene Tha'
Dene Tha’, with a registered population of 2,493 people, 1,799 on reserve, is situated 812 kilometres northwest of Edmonton. Its water problems date back to 2005 when Drinking Water Advisories were put in place at two sites, Chateh, and Bushe River, because of unacceptable turbidity or particle counts. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the system and found that upgrades were required to the plant and operators needed training and certification. Long term upgrades to the plant are currently being reviewed.
Progress to date: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada has been working with the First Nation since the Drinking Water Advisory was issued. A raw water reservoir expansion, approved for 2004-05 to increase raw water storage and improve raw water quality, is now complete and the new reservoir is being filled. The Drinking Water Advisory in Chateh is due to high turbidity levels. Operators are actively participating in the Circuit Rider Training Program and good records are being kept. A feasibility/assessment was completed on the plant and reviews are now being undertaken to determine the long-term requirements. The Drinking Water Advisory on the Bushe River Reserves has been lifted with the replacement of the cisterns and acceptable test results.

Driftpile
Driftpile, with a registered population of 2,232 people, 778 on reserve, is situated about 300 kilometres northwest of Edmonton. Its current water problems date back to May 2005 when a Drinking Water Advisory was put in place because to unacceptable turbidity levels in the water distribution system.

Progress to date: The risk level for this community has been reduced from high to medium due to the work that has been done over the course of the year. A new water treatment plant was opened Oct. 11, 2006 and the Drinking Water Advisory immediately lifted. Currently the First Nation is looking to partner with two other First Nations to recruit an oversight operator until it has a fully certified operator.

Frog Lake
Frog Lake, with a registered population of 2,409 people, 1,415 on reserve, is situated about 245 kilometres east of Edmonton. Its water problems date back to July 2005 when a Drinking Water Advisory was put in place because of equipment malfunction resulting in inadequate chlorination. In the fiscal year 2005/06, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the system and found that plant repairs were required and there were problems with the operation and maintenance work. Funding was provided to the First Nation in 2006 to undertake the necessary repairs and upgrade.

Progress to date: Operators are actively participating in the Circuit Rider Program and record-keeping is improving. It was earlier anticipated that the Drinking Water Advisory would have been lifted by Dec. 15, 2006, however further work is necessary to clean and disinfect the ancillary pumphouses, reservoirs, and water mains prior to lifting the Drinking Water Advisory. Additional treatment plant repairs have been initiated. The Region continues to monitor the situation and will be following up on the issues to ensure that correction of the deficiencies is effectively completed.
**British Columbia**

**Semiahmoo**
Semiahmoo, with a registered population of 77 people, 48 on reserve, is situated about 15 kilometres south of Surrey. Its water problems date back to October 2005 when the Drinking Water Advisory was put in place because of unacceptable microbiological quality. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the situation and found that a chlorination system was needed. Officials also found that the First Nation had permitted some businesses and homes to be connected without a permit or being inspected, creating a potential source of cross contamination.

*Progress to date:* Work started in January 2006 and will continue through March 31, 2007. Construction of the chlorination system is scheduled to be completed by the end of next March. It is expected that the Drinking Water Advisory will stay in place until the issue of unauthorized connections is resolved. Construction was due to start in early March, 2007, but the First Nation has insisted the location of the building be changed. Indian and Northern Affairs is working to engage the First Nation to address the issues.

**Shuswap**
Shuswap, with a registered population of 230 people, 72 on reserve, is situated near Invermere. Its water problems date back to 2001 when the Drinking Water Advisory was put in place because of inadequate disinfection or disinfectant residual and unacceptable microbiological quality. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the system and found that the operator was uncertified and the wells had been disconnected. This meant the First Nation drew water from another water source, which was untreated.

*Progress to date:* The risk level for this community has been reduced from high to medium due to the work that has been done over the course of the year. Work started on July 26, 2006 and was completed Sept. 27, 2006. The wells have been reconnected and the operator has been trained and certified. As a result, on Nov. 9, 2006 the Drinking Water Advisory was lifted.

**Toquaht**
Toquaht, with a registered population of 118 people, 10 on reserve, is situated near Ucluelet. Its water problems date back to 2002 when the Drinking Water Advisory was put in place because of inadequate disinfection or disinfectant residual, unacceptable microbiological quality and operational issues. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the operation and found problems with the operation and maintenance work, no chlorination and that a new water source was required.
**Progress to date:** Work started in January 2006 and is expected to continue until January 2008. Bottled water is being provided to the residents, operators have been trained and certified, and chlorination is occurring. Drilling for a new ground water source was done in November and analysis of the water is now underway. It is expected that the Drinking Water Advisory will remain in effect until the new water source is completed and a treatment system installed.

**Canoe Creek**
Canoe Creek, with a registered population of 662 people, 120 on reserve, is situated southwest of Williams Lake on the east shore of the Fraser River. Its water problems date back to 1999 when the Drinking Water Advisory was put in place because of inadequate disinfection or disinfectant residual, unacceptable microbiological quality and operational issues. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the operation of the system and found that there was no disinfection and problems with the operation and maintenance work.

**Progress to date:** Work started on June 1, 1998 and will continue to December 2007. A plant upgrade is underway which will address the issue of disinfection. It is expected the Drinking Water Advisory will be lifted in December 2007 when the upgrades are complete.

**Lake Babine Nation - Community of Fort Babine**
Fort Babine, is one of three Lake Babine Nation communities with a total registered population of 2,200 people with 250 on the reserve, situated 100 kilometres north of Smithers. Its water problems date back to 1999 when the Drinking Water Advisory was put in place because of inadequate disinfection or disinfectant residual, unacceptable microbiological quality and operational issues. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the plant and found that the necessary repair work had not been completed.

**Progress to date:** Bottled water is being provided to the residents. Work on the system started in 1999 and continues to March 2007. Repairs are ongoing and the operator has been certified. Commissioning of the water treatment plant is scheduled for spring of 2007. It is expected that the Drinking Water Advisory will be lifted once repair work, testing, and commissioning of the treatment plant has been completed.

**Toosey**
Toosey, with a registered population of 276 people, 141 on reserve, is situated about 200 kilometres south of Prince George. Its water problems date back to 2004 when the Drinking Water Advisory was put in place because of unacceptable microbiological
quality and operational issues. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the operation of the system and found that the necessary operation and maintenance work was not being done.

*Progress to date:* Work started on December 2005 and continues to December 2007. Minor repairs have been completed and water source protection measures have been taken. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada will continue to engage the First Nation to address the issues.

**Yukon Office**

**Taku River Tlingit**

Taku River Tlingit, with a registered population of 372 people, 83 on reserve, is situated in northern British Columbia. The community has two water systems, one adjacent to the town of Atlin, and the other is a bulk water fill system. Its water problems date back to January 2006 when a Drinking Water Advisory was put in place because of an increase in turbidity. This year, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada evaluated the turbidity level and found that the increase was caused by work being done to replace a circulating pump in the system. Corroded galvanized piping in the water treatment plant was also discovered when this work was being done.

*Progress to date:* Work to replace the affected pipes was completed in March 2006 and the system was flushed. Turbidity of the water has improved since the galvanized piping was replaced and the Drinking Water Advisory was lifted April 18, 2006. Pre-design reports for an upgrade to the system and improvements to the existing water supply and delivery systems have been completed for both water systems. The final design is near completion, with construction of a new system set to begin in the spring of 2007.