

EVALUATION OF THE WATER AND WASTEWATER ON-RESERVE PROGRAM: KEY FINDINGS

Temporal/Financial Coverage:

- 2014-15 to 2017-18, evaluation also includes activities undertaken from March 2017 up to and including fiscal year 2018-2019
- The total materiality over the scope of the evaluation amounts to approximately \$2.4 Billion

Evaluation Assessed the following Domains:

- Relevance
- Performance (including training and capacity development)
- Relationships
- Best Practices
- Covid-19 Impacts

Involved 2 ISC Sectors:

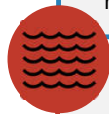
1 Regional Operations: Infrastructure and Capacity Program – Water and Wastewater (W&WW), also referred to as the First Nations Water and Wastewater Enhancement Program (FNWWEPP). ISC Regional Operations Sector. Average expenditures about \$420M per year

2 First Nations and Inuit Health Branch: Public health-related water and wastewater activities supported by the Environmental Public Health Division (EPHD). Average expenditures about \$43M per year



Performance

- The number of Long Term-Drinking Water Advisories (LT-DWAs) in First Nation communities has been reduced from 105 in November 2015 to 59 in March 2019 as a result of investments in made by the program. As of January 2021, 57 LT-DWAs remain.
- Climate change is likely to have a significant impact on source water, drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. To date, ISC response has been reactive rather than proactive.
- The Circuit Rider Training Program is considered to be an effective method of providing ongoing training and support to operators, but stable funding remains an issue.
- The Environmental Public Health Program (EPHP) is effective in training Community Based Water Monitors (CBWMs) and others responsible for sampling drinking water through Environmental Public Health Officers (EPHOs).
- FN communities with access to trained CBWMs or EPHOs to monitor drinking water quality met the program target of 100%.



Covid-19 Impacts

Challenges:

- Increased costs due to schedule delays, some work is only possible in the summer season.
- Backlog in routine water inspections and training.
- Focus is on mitigating risks of COVID-19 outbreaks in communal spaces, training activities have been cancelled/postponed.

Positive Impacts:

- Heightened awareness of the importance of clean water and public health
- Role of Environmental Public Health Officers (EPHOs) has been emphasized among community members.



Relevance

- There is a clear and continued need for investment in infrastructure, Operations and Maintenance (O&M), training and capacity development for water and wastewater systems in First Nations communities.
- There is a continued need to provide Environmental Public Health Services to First Nations communities.



Roles & Relationships

- Clear distinction between infrastructure and public health has ensured that there is no overlap between ISC Regional Operations and ISC First Nations Inuit Health Branch.
- Focusing on eliminating LT-DWAs has been accompanied by a move towards more centralized decision making as opposed to regional prioritization of projects.



Best Practices

- Circuit Rider Training Program
- Prioritization of LT-DWAs
- Support for operators and systems
- Procurement, design and construction
- Municipal Type Agreements
- Outreach and Promotion
- Planning for sustainable systems

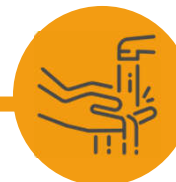


MANAGEMENT RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN (MRAP)

Recommendation #1: Implement policy and procedures that result in the federal government providing 100% of the O&M costs for water and wastewater infrastructure in First Nations communities.

Action: ISC will allocate the new O&M investments and revise the departmental policies and procedures to reflect the increase to 100% funding of the O&M formula for water and wastewater in First Nations communities.

Dates: March 2021- Q4 2021-2022 (for allocation of first two years of new funding)



Recommendation #4: Develop policies or guidelines that incorporate climate change adaptation & mitigation into infrastructure design and construction as well as source water protection.

Action: ISC will work with partners and First Nations to identify actions for climate change adaptation & mitigation measures to be integrated into Water & Waste Water infrastructure design and construction.

Dates: March 2021-Q4 2022-2023

Action: As part of the on-going policy and protocol review, ISC will incorporate climate change adaptation and mitigation considerations into its water and wastewater policies where relevant.

Dates: July 2020 - Q4 2021-2022

Action: ISC will work with First Nation partners to develop an analysis or guidance on how climate change adaptation and mitigation measures may be considered in the Terms of Reference for infrastructure design, thereby requiring their consultants to include these considerations in the design and construction of infrastructure.

Dates: March 2021 - Q4 2021-2022

Recommendation #2: Increase the priority of wastewater infrastructure projects, which to-date have received disproportionately less funding than drinking water projects but pose potential risk to many communities.

Action: ISC regional Operations will prioritize projects at the regional level, which will ensure more critical wastewater projects are funded. The national prioritization process for W&WW will at the same time be refocused to better allow for those regional priorities including wastewater projects posing a risk to human health or the environment, shifting away from centralized decision making which focused predominately on LT-DWAs.

Dates: March 2021 - Q4 2022-2023



Recommendation #5: Determine the impact on First Nations communities by program area as a result of current EPHO staffing levels and priorities.

Action: Produce a synthesis report that will use existing and future reports and documentation to evaluate the impact of the current EPHO numbers on the ability of the Program to meet the National EPHP Framework.

Dates: March 2021-end of Q3 2022-2023

Action: Program will undertake an analysis of EPHO gaps on food safety/food facilities and potential risks to health of community members and identify potential mitigation measures.

Dates: March 2021 - Q2 2021-2022

Recommendation #3: Where applicable, support regions to provide 5-year rather than 1-year funding agreements for the Circuit Rider Training Program (CRTP) & where demand exists among First Nation communities, to expand the model to include other forms of infrastructure.

Action: ISC will develop a plan to put in place 5-year funding agreements for the remaining interested regions who have in place 1-year funding agreements for CRTP.

Dates: January 2021-Q2 2022-2023

Action: Department is exploring options for the expansion of the CRTP to schools & other public community infrastructure in FN communities. New Program will be subject to funding approval.

Dates: March 2021 -TBC

