

GOVERNMENT OF CANADA REPORTS SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS IN IMPROVING FIRST NATION WATER QUALITY

In less than two years, Government reduces the number of high-risk First Nation water systems by over half.

<http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nr/prs/j-a2008/2-2986-eng.asp>

Nipissing First Nation, Ontario (January 17, 2008) - The Honourable Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, today released a progress report on the [*Plan of Action for Drinking Water in First Nations Communities*](#), outlining improvements made in water quality on reserves across Canada.

The release of the report fulfills a commitment, made as part of the plan of action, to report on progress on a regular basis.

“In March 2006, our government introduced a water plan of action that significantly changed the way water quality was addressed in First Nation communities,” said Minister Strahl. “We are committed to ensuring that residents of First Nations enjoy the same protection afforded other Canadians when it comes to drinking water. Since coming to office, we have reduced by over half the number of high risk First Nation water systems.”

This number of high-risk water systems has reduced from 193 to 85. Also in 2006, 21 communities were identified as priorities, which meant that the community had both a high-risk system and a drinking water advisory. Today, only six communities remain on that list.

“The progress we are seeing is because of our government's commitment to work with First Nations communities and deliver real results,” added Strahl.

The progress report also references a [*Procedure for Addressing Drinking Water Advisories in First Nations Communities South of 60° \(external link, opens a new window\)*](#), developed by Health Canada, in partnership with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and First Nation stakeholders. It promotes a team approach to addressing drinking water advisories.

“Our goal is to provide communities with the support they need so that drinking water advisories can be lifted as soon as possible,” said the Honourable Tony Clement, Minister of Health. “We are committed to working with First Nations communities to increase their capacity to prevent and respond to drinking water quality issues. This new procedure will be an important tool in achieving this objective.”

Minister Strahl also highlighted several Ontario First Nations who, under the plan of action, have received funding support for water projects that will benefit their communities. Over \$61 million went to the following Ontario First Nations in 2006-2007 for upgrading existing and building new water and wastewater systems:

- Nipissing First Nation

- Moose Deer Point First Nation
- Henvey Inlet First Nation
- Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek
- Mattagami First Nation
- Saugeen First Nation
- Red Rock First Nation

“I’m pleased to see the progress that is being announced today in many of our First Nation communities,” said Grand Council Chief John Beaucage, Anishinabek Nation. “First Nations in Ontario want to work with Canada, not just on the projects highlighted today, but in all possible efforts to ensure a reliable supply of clean, safe drinking water on reserve. Ultimately, we want to improve the living conditions for our people so we have healthy and safe communities.”

A complete description of the projects can be found in the accompanying [backgrounder](#).

[Plan of Action for Drinking Water in First Nations Communities - Progress Report January 17, 2008.](#)

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Backgrounder - FEDERAL INVESTMENTS IN FIRST NATION WATER AND WASTEWATER SYSTEMS IN ONTARIO

Nipissing First Nation — \$15.1 million: funding for two water infrastructure projects at Nipissing First Nation's Garden Village community. One project (worth approximately \$14.1 million) involves building new water and wastewater treatment plants, as well as watermains and sewer mains. Construction has started and is expected to take approximately two years. Completion of this project will remove the high risk rating of the water treatment system in this community.

The second project, which is already underway, involves the development of an 84 lot subdivision, which includes roads, ditches, watermains and sewer mains. It is being cost-shared between the First Nation (\$2.6 million) and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) (\$1.0 million).

Nipissing First Nation, located on the north shore of Lake Nipissing between the City of North Bay and the town of Sturgeon Falls, has approximately 2,100 members, 840 of whom live on reserve.

Moose Deer Point First Nation — \$13.2 million: funding for a new water treatment plant and associated infrastructure for Moose Deer Point First Nation. The project consists of: a new water treatment plant (slow sand filtration); a new water intake located in Issac Bay; a water distribution system connecting all three parcels of the First Nations land base; and, an elevated storage reservoir centrally located at Gordon Bay. The First Nation is in the process of selecting a contractor through a competitive bidding process.

As a result of interim upgrades, Moose Deer Point's drinking water advisory was lifted on December 19, 2007. Consequently, this First Nation has been removed from the "Priority Community" category.

Moose Deer Point First Nation, located approximately 21 kilometres west of Bracebridge on the east shore of Georgian Bay, has a total of 449 members, 143 of whom live on reserve.

Henvey Inlet First Nation — \$5.2 million: funding for an upgrade of Henvey Inlet's water system. The project includes construction of a new water treatment plant, water mains, hydrants, and a new water storage reservoir. Construction started in September 2006 and the plant has been in operation since early December 2007.

Henvey Inlet First Nation, located approximately 65 km south of Sudbury, Ontario, has approximately 590 members, 160 of whom live on reserve.

Biinjitiwaabik Zaaging Anishinaabek (BZA) — \$5.1 million: funding for construction of a new water treatment plant and upgrades to a wastewater lift station at BZA. The water treatment plant upgrade includes: a slow sand filtration system with ultraviolet and chlorine dioxide disinfection; new pumps to increase water pressure for improved fire protection; a new backup diesel generator; and, a new building. Improvements to the lift station include new pumps, new

pipes and an automated link to the water treatment plant. The First Nation has started work on this project and is estimating completion by spring 2008.

As of June 2007, BZA lowered its risk rating from high to medium because the First Nation's back-up water treatment plant operator has received further training, ensuring more consistent operation of the system.

BZA, located approximately 160 kilometres northeast of Thunder Bay, Ontario on the southeast shore of Lake Nipigon, has approximately 670 members, 340 of whom live on reserve.

Mattagami First Nation — \$3.2 million: funding for a major water treatment system upgrade at Mattagami First Nation. The upgrade includes: improvements to the disinfection system; improved automation of the plant; addition of a back-up generator; and, expansion of the current building to include the new systems. Work on the project is expected to start in the coming months and estimated completion is spring 2008.

In June 2007, the First Nation lowered its water system risk rating from high to medium by ensuring more consistent plant operation, digging a second well and developing a well protection plan.

The Mattagami First Nation, located approximately 113 kilometres west of Kirkland Lake, Ontario, has approximately 450 members, 190 of whom live on reserve.

Saugeen First Nation — \$14 million: funding for a new water supply system at Saugeen First Nation. The new system consists of: a connection to the town of Saugeen Shores municipal water supply system; construction of a pump house and above grade reservoir; a water distribution system; back-up generating system; elevated storage reservoir; and, the decommissioning of six pump houses and associated small-diameter water mains. The First Nation has started work on this project and is estimating completion by spring 2008.

The Saugeen First Nation, located south of the Bruce Peninsula approximately 40 km west of Owen Sound, Ontario, has approximately 1,560 members, 740 of whom live on reserve.

Red Rock First Nation — \$6 million: funding for expansion of Red Rock First Nation's current water treatment plant. The project includes: new filtration systems; expanding water storage and treatment capacity; new pumps; a back-up diesel generator; and, additions to the existing building to house the new equipment. The First Nation has started work on this project and is estimating completion by spring 2008.

Red Rock First Nation, located approximately 114 kilometres east of Thunder Bay, Ontario, has approximately 1,440 members, 260 of whom live on reserve.