



December 12, 2024

**Open Letter to Members of Parliament: Support and Prioritize the Advancement of Bill C-61,
First Nations Clean Water Act**

Dear Members of Parliament:

The Assembly of First Nations calls on all Members of Parliament to prioritize the advancement of Bill C-61, *First Nations Clean Water Act*. Your support is needed to ensure this Bill is referred to the Senate Standing Committee on Indigenous Peoples (APPA) before Parliament breaks for the holiday season.

The water and wastewater crisis in First Nations communities demands urgent action. Many First Nations continue to live without access to safe and adequate water systems. First Nations are 90 times more likely than other Canadians to lack access to running water, and over 30 long-term water advisories remain in place, and in some communities, for decades.

Bill C-61 represents a step toward addressing the long-standing water issues faced by First Nations. It acknowledges clean drinking water as a basic human right and a fiduciary obligation of the Crown. Importantly, it establishes a framework for water and wastewater services that are co-developed with First Nations and respect the unique needs, rights, and jurisdiction of our Nations.

This legislation reflects years of advocacy by First Nations and marks a milestone in a decades-long fight for adequate water and wastewater in First Nations across Canada. Advancing this Bill before Parliament breaks for the holiday season will demonstrate Canada's commitment to upholding its responsibilities and working in partnership with First Nations to address this crisis.

We cannot afford further delays to this legislation or missed opportunities while First Nations continue to live without access to safe and clean water. Bill C-61 must advance now, not next year. We urge all Members of Parliament, across all party lines, to act. Support and prioritize the advancement of Bill C-61, refer it to the Senate, and take this necessary step toward ensuring every First Nation has access to the clean and safe drinking water, as it is their basic human right.

Megwetch,

Woodhouse.

Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak
National Chief

Cc: AFN Executive Committee
Chiefs Committee on Housing and Infrastructure