



## What is the history of this issue and how does it impact First Nations?

As of October 15, 2021, there are 44 long-term drinking water advisories in effect in 32 First Nations. To date, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) confirms that 118 long-term advisories have been lifted since November 2015. However, this report number includes only ISC-funded assets, and systems with 5 connections or more; they do not include the many First Nations on individual wells or cisterns. These numbers also do not include many advisories in British Columbia, and those within the Saskatoon Tribal Council.

It is of the utmost importance for the federal government to live up to their commitment of ending all long-term drinking water advisories and upholding the United Nations affirmed human right to safe water. The AFN continues to seek additional information from the federal government on their proposed Action Plan, including a transparent reporting and monitoring process.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the impact of inadequate infrastructure and the importance of clean water in addressing health emergencies. Addressing these gaps is critical to ensuring the overall health and well-being of all First Nations. Therefore, the AFN also continues to advocate for and support the creation of First Nations-led policies and solutions related to access to clean and reliable drinking water.

Additionally, looming legislation, the impacts of climate change, questions around sustainable funding, and the implications of a new national water agency have stimulated further uncertainty, as they all have major impacts on First Nations access to safe, clean drinking water.

## How has the AFN's recent advocacy affected this area?

The AFN continues to advocate for access to safe, clean and reliable drinking water for all First Nations. Specifically, the AFN continues to urge the federal government to invest in First Nations infrastructure, to close the infrastructure gap by 2030, and to prioritize the human right to safe drinking water through significant investments into water treatment and distribution for all First Nations.

As directed by resolutions from the First Nations-in-Assembly, the AFN has advocated to the federal government to commit to working in partnership with First Nations to repeal and replace the Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act (SDWFNA) with co-developed, First Nations-led legislation. The AFN also facilitated regionally-led engagement sessions on important components of new legislation. Regional engagement sessions held across the country in



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**SECTOR: WATER**  
November 2021

February-March 2021 brought together First Nations leadership, Knowledge Keepers, water operators, technicians and youth from every region to discuss the next steps in the repeal and replacement of the SDWFNA.

Simultaneously, the AFN conducted regionally-led engagement sessions on the concept and approach to developing a Long-Term Strategy for Water and Wastewater post-2021, based on feedback and directed by resolutions from the First Nations-in-Assembly. These engagement sessions highlighted key regional water concerns, and the need to incorporate First Nations Rights and knowledge into any Strategy moving forward. The creation of a Long-Term strategy will also help fulfill the recent Throne Speech commitment to close the infrastructure gap on-reserve by 2030 and to developing sustainable and predictable funding mechanisms for First Nations water and wastewater.

In collaboration with the AFN Environment, Lands and Water Branch, we continue to advocate to Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), for meaningful First Nations inclusion in any discussions regarding the development of the Canada Water Agency. The AFN advocates to ensure that First Nations are adequately engaged through a collaborative process that respects First Nations Inherent and Treaty rights, as well as free, prior and informed consent.

### Where do we hope to go in the future?

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Moving forward, the feedback received in the SDWFNA engagements will inform the work and discussions of the SDWFNA Joint Working Group, which will be struck in late 2021, and will help to develop the draft framework to guide the co-drafting of new legislation. The repeal and replacement of the SDWFNA with new legislation by First Nations, for First Nations, will ensure long-term and sustainable funding for First Nations water and wastewater, including adequate operations and maintenance funds.

Furthermore, the AFN Infrastructure Sector, which includes all water infrastructure, will continue its engagements in 2021-2022, with the purpose of building on the feedback and input received from First Nations during the 2020/2021 engagements. Based on the findings from the 2020/21 engagement process, the 2021/2022 sessions will focus on targeted discussions with specific groups, including youth, women, Elders and operators, and their perspectives on the development of a vision for a long-term water and wastewater strategy.

The AFN continues to urge the federal government to commit to co-developing and co-drafting strategies in true partnership with First Nations, including adequate funding commitments.