



WHAT IS THE FIRST NATION WATER CRISIS?

THE ISSUE OF LONG-TERM DRINKING WATER ADVISORIES IN CANADIAN FIRST NATIONS

What is a long-term drinking water advisory?



A drinking water advisory (or DWA) is a warning issued to communities advising them not to drink water that is unsafe. Drinking water advisories are put in place for many reasons, such as poor water sanitation, water line breaks, and equipment failure. Long-term drinking water advisories are those that have been in place for more than 1 year, with some lasting years or decades.



Canada contains 18% of the world's freshwater, making it one of the most water-rich countries in the world. According to the World Health Organization, 99% of Canadians have access to clean, drinkable water. However, the remaining 1% of the population without access consists overwhelmingly of First Nations people living on reserves.

WHAT ARE THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS?



Water-borne infections in communities that have longstanding drinking water advisories are 26 times higher than the Canadian national average



Contaminants in drinking water include E.coli, coliform, cancer-causing Trichalometanes, and uranium. Exposure to these contaminants can cause lasting gastrointestinal disorders and an increased risk of cancer



Long-term DWAs are especially punitive for lower-income & financially unstable families on First Nations reserves, who struggle with the cost of coping

GOVERNMENT ACTION WHAT HAS BEEN DONE?

FIRST FEDERAL COMMITMENT

2015



In November 2015, the Government of Canada committed over \$2 billion to end all long-term drinking water advisories affecting public water systems on reserves by March 2021

UPDATED FEDERAL COMMITMENT

2020



In December 2020, the federal government announced a further \$1.5 billion in \$1.5 billion in new investments for clean drinking water in First Nations communities

THE CURRENT STATE

2021



As of March 9th, 2021, 58 long-term water advisories remain in effect in over 38 communities



Case Study: Grassy Narrows (Asubpeesewagong)

In the 1960s and 70s, the provincial government allowed a pulp and paper mill to dump over 10 tonnes of mercury into the watershed. This industrial pollution contaminated the water in Grassy Narrows with mercury, contaminating this community of 1,000+ residents and affecting over three generations.

Grassy Narrows had been on long-term drinking water advisory since 2013. As part of the 2015 federal government initiative to end all long-term drinking water advisories, the Grassy Narrows advisory was lifted in September 2020.

However, despite the advisory ending, long-term ramifications remain within the community. Today, 90% of the population in Grassy Narrows experiences symptoms of mercury poisoning. These include neurological problems- such as seizures, cognitive delays, and trouble swallowing and standing. Despite these negative health impacts, few residents have received financial compensation.



WANT TO LEARN MORE?

CHECK OUT THE GOVERNMENT WEBSITE!

<https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1506514143353/1633317130660>

