

Best Practices for First Nations Drinking Water Quality Monitoring Atlantic Region

Community-based Water Quality (CBWM) Training NSCC (Dartmouth Campus) November 15-17, 2016



Presentation Outline

• Background

- Implications for Safe Drinking Water
- First Nations Information Sessions/ Dialogue
- Actions Taken as a Result of the Act
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• Current Status

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- Potential Options for First Nations to Consider
- All Chiefs Forum

• Next Steps

- EPH Meeting with Individual First Nations

Background: Implications for Safe Drinking Water

- The Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act (the Act), formerly Bill S-8, became law on June 19, 2013 and came into force on November 1, 2013.
- In response to this, the Environmental Public Health (EPH) Program at First Nations Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) Atlantic, began information sessions/ dialogue with First Nations about best practices for monitoring drinking water.

Background: First Nations Dialogue (2014-16)

Information Sessions/ Dialogue with First Nations:

- Updated some band administrations during community visits including Chiefs, councillors and band managers
- Health Directors meeting
- Joint First Nations Community-based Water Monitor/Operator training session
- First Nations organization, tribal council representatives
- Atlantic Policy Congress (APC) First Nations Water Symposium
- Public Health Primary Care committee (PHPC)
- First Nation Health Partnership committee

Actions Taken As A Result of the Act

Initially

- FNIHB Atlantic was being proactive in anticipation of regulations and was working towards a cooperative model by integrating the use of accredited labs as part of the process used by the Community Based Water Monitors (CBWMs).
- Secured additional funding to incorporate the use of accredited labs.

Change in Process

- The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) during a special All Chiefs meeting in Dec 2015, passed an All Chiefs Resolution to repeal the Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act.

Background: What We Heard

- Dialogue with First Nations suggests varied levels of readiness/ interest in moving to accredited labs at this time.
- The Atlantic Policy Congress (APC) expressed interest in exploring the potential of establishing a First Nations accredited lab to perform testing on drinking water.
- During the APC Water Symposium in March 2016, some Chiefs questioned “Why” the need to use accredited labs. It was requested that the use of accredited labs be brought back to PHPC committee for recommendation to the Health Partnership for consideration. This was done in May 2016.
- PHPC’s recommendation to the Health Partnership was that each First Nation Community should decide which option is best for their community.

Current Status: FNIHB Ongoing Support

- FNIHB Atlantic continues to be committed to support drinking water quality monitoring and assurance.
- FNIHB is supportive of exploring best practices for testing drinking water quality.
- FNIHB will continue to work collaboratively with First Nations on drinking water quality monitoring.
- FNIHB Atlantic is also interested in supporting First Nations in future developments for safe drinking water regulations.

Current Status: Option Considerations for First Nations

	Option	Pros	Cons
A	Status quo: CBWM continue to sample and test drinking water for bacteria and chlorine residual.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. No change in contribution funding. b. Capacity development of First Nations will continue. c. No delay in testing (within 24 hrs). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Field testing equipment is not accredited or recognized lab. b. Testing equipment breakdown could create a gap in service.
B	Integrated model: Incorporating the use of accredited labs as part of the process used by the Community Based Water Monitors (CBWMs). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CBWM would collect all samples • Accredited lab would conduct the bacterial testing • CBWM would conduct the residual chlorine testing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Contribution funding unchanged or would increase. b. CBWM would continue in water quality role. c. Same standards for all water utilities. d. No delay in testing water (within 24 hrs). e. Consistent water quality monitoring and reporting of results. f. No gap in service. g. Capacity development at First Nations would continue. i.e. sampling, record keeping, working with EHO to address unacceptable results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Use of bacterial water testing equipment would discontinue.
C	Combination of A and B: CBWM sends samples to an accredited lab as well as completing bacterial testing on a rotational basis and conducting chlorine residual on a regular basis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Contribution funding increased slightly to cover shipping costs to accredited labs. b. CBWM continues on site testing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Inconsistent water quality monitoring and reporting of results. b. Water regulations may not be met when implemented.
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All Chiefs Forum

- FNIHB Atlantic, Environmental Public Health (EPH) program plans to work with individual communities so they can determine best option for their community while waiting for federal regulations to be developed.
- All Chiefs supportive for EPH to meet with individual band administrations to explore the use of accredited labs for testing drinking water quality as a Best Practice.

Accredited Lab Usage To Date

- Using Accredited Lab : 26 First Nations
- Commitment to Use Accredited Labs: 1 First Nations
 - Pilot for one year than re-assess 1 First Nation
- Not to Use an Accredited Lab: 1 First Nation
- Remaining meetings with Band Administration: 4 First Nations

Ongoing Work

- Current accredited lab contracts in NS and NB expire March 31, 2017.
- Work with Public Services and Procurement Canada to finalise the Request for Proposal for Accredited Labs Contracts for NS and NB.
 - evaluate proposals
 - contract for 5 years, with option years.
- Finalise MOA with PEI Lab
- Meet with four First Nations to explore use of accredited labs.
- Work with First Nations as use of accredited labs progress

Questions ???