



OFS Canada JPIC Communiqué JPIC April 2020

Third-World Conditions in a First-World Country

Drinking Water Advisories on Reserves

Residents of Canada are fortunate to have 7 per cent (according to [Maclean's](#)) or 18 per cent (according to [The Globe and Mail](#)) of renewable fresh water supply in the world although they are only 0.5 per cent of the population in the world. You get the idea...



We have access to plenty of fresh water, but

As of early 2018, there were about 1,300 water systems on First Nations reserves, close to 500 of these were privately run and the rest were financially supported by [The Department of Indigenous Services Canada \(DISC\)](#). Close to 250 were announced to be added by DISC - the total would be more than 1,000.

Ironically, as recently as 2015, there were 105 public drinking water advisories in First Nations communities, according to Indigenous Services Canada's website.



A drinking water advisory is issued when:

- there is a problem in the water line, equipment, and filtration/disinfection or
- there are no trained personnel to run the water system or test/ensure the water quality

The process to issue an advisory on the reserves can be as simple as notifying the Chief and Council, but **the process to fix the problem can be lengthy**, 3-4 years if the current water treatment

system needs to be overhauled and funded by the federal government. As of February 17, 2020, the federal government had 61 drinking water advisories - all promised to be lifted by March 2021.

Some have negative opinions about the progress made by the federal government. In 2017, [the David Suzuki Foundation issued a 45-page report](#) that concluded that the federal government was slow to address the drinking water advisories. In September 2019, [Global News reported](#) a similar sentiment, adding that there were no qualified personnel to run the water system in remote areas and only a few households in any communities could access potable water with the rest having to buy jugs of water.



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“... First Nations receive less funding for clean water than neighbouring municipalities simply because they are regulated federally, not provincially”.

It is shocking to find that the drinking water advisories (conditions common in third-world countries) still exist in Canada, a first-world country.

The federal government have taken steps to rectify the problem, and the vigilant critics, though pessimistic, have nudged the government to keep its long-overdue promise.

You can help:

- 1) **Be aware** about the drinking water system at the reserve closest to your municipalities. Check out the [The Department of Indigenous Services Canada \(DISC\)](#) or sac-isc.gc.ca
- 2) **Contact** your local MP to ensure that it is the government's priority to make drinking water system accessible for everyone in the reserve.
- 3) **Contact** the Federal Minister of The Department of Indigenous Services Canada (DISC) Marc Miller, and let him know you support immediate action to rectify the provision of healthy drinking water on First Nation Reserves Marc.Miller@parl.gc.ca, Telephone: 613-995-6403, Fax: 613-995-6404
- 4) **Sign the Petition** [End long-term drinking water advisories on first nation reserves across Canada](#), and share it on your Twitter, Facebook and other social media accounts.

Note that all the pictures above are hyperlinked to their sources (i.e. if you click the picture, you can read the stories behind the picture).

Rule 15

Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith.

Pax et bonum

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