

AFN Water Summit

Drinking Water in First Nations

**Presented by: Chad Westmacott, Director General,
Community Infrastructure Branch, ISC**

November 24, 2020



Indigenous Services
Canada

Services aux
Autochtones Canada

Canada

Drinking Water

Canada's Commitment to Clean Drinking Water (2015)

- Strengthen water and wastewater infrastructure in First Nation communities
- End long-term drinking water advisories on public systems on reserve

Speech from the Throne (2020)

Make additional resiliency investments to meet the clean drinking water commitment in First Nations communities

- Underscores the commitment to clean drinking water
- Addressing LTDWAs is just one aspect
- Further action is required as drinking water issues remain

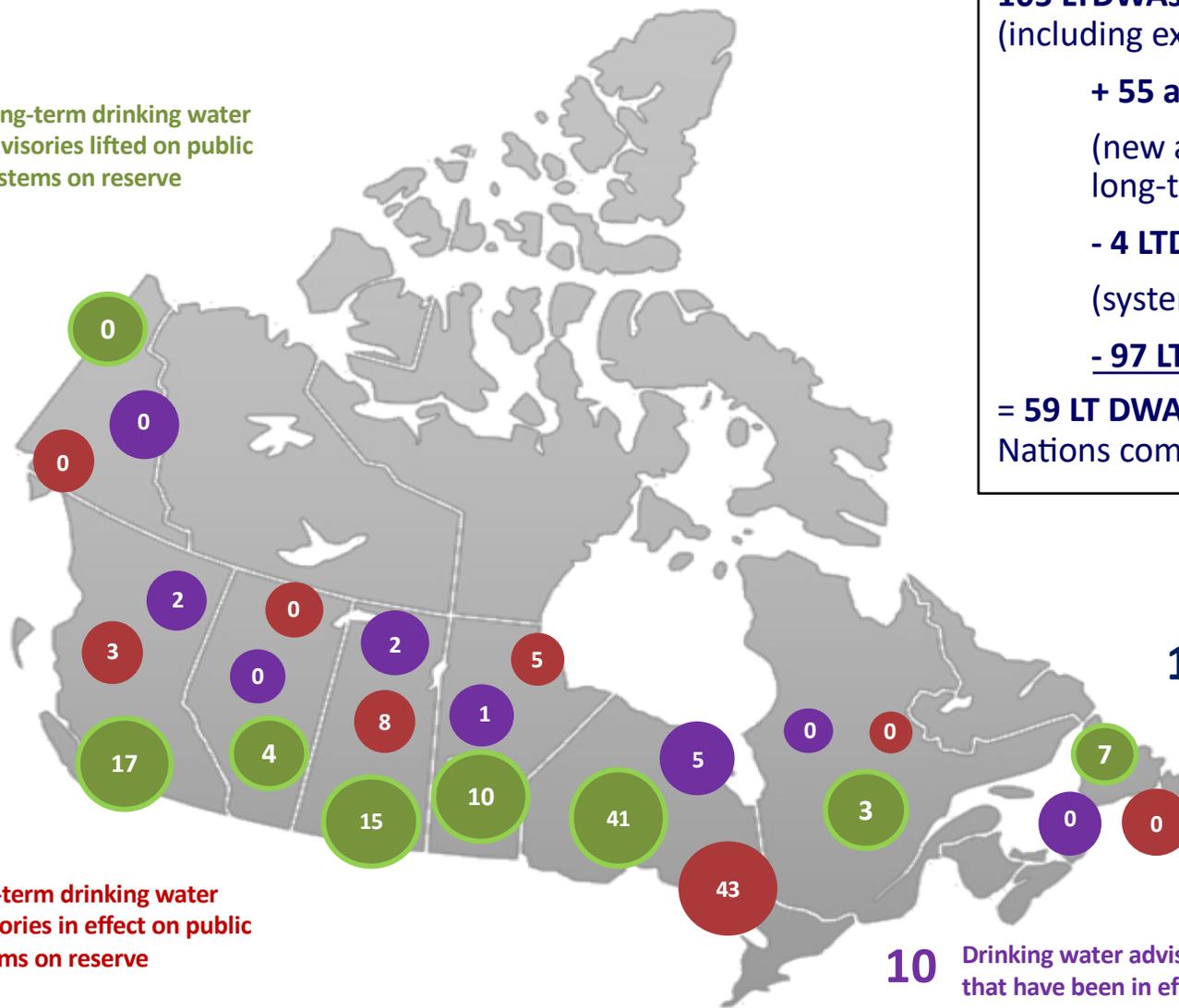
COVID

- Unforeseen and exceptional impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Delays to projects due to:
 - necessary public health measures
 - contractor and human resources shortages
 - supply chain interruptions
- Has impacted meeting targets to complete infrastructure projects both on and off reserve across Canada
- Working with First Nations to assess the status of their projects, determine existing and planned COVID-19 public health measures, and estimate appropriate target dates for project completion
- Due to the uncertainty around advancement of water projects as a result of the pandemic, reporting on the web page was temporarily suspended

Although projects have experienced delays, it does not stop our commitment

Progress on Advisories

97 Long-term drinking water advisories lifted on public systems on reserve



105 LTDWAs in effect in November 2015 (including expanded scope)

- + 55 added (new advisories that became long-term)
- 4 LTDWAs deactivated (systems no longer in use)
- 97 LTDWAs lifted

= **59 LT DWAs remaining**, in 41 First Nations communities

59 Long-term drinking water advisories in effect on public systems on reserve

170 Short-term drinking water advisories lifted since November 2015

10 Drinking water advisories that have been in effect for 2-12 months

Ongoing Initiatives

Operators

- Ongoing funding to assist with maintenance and training of operators through CRTP
- Developing a career guide and identifying the gaps and challenges for women water operators
- Youth career profiles relying on social media (including chats) and ambassadors during COVID

Centralized Water and Wastewater Hub Pilot Projects (“HUBS”)

- 24/7 monitoring and oversight via HUB Managers who will act as Overall Responsible Operator to local Operators In Charge
- Maintain and collect water quality data
- Develop operator capacity by coordinating/delivering training, offering mentoring and support to local operators to maintain or acquire the appropriate licensing requirements

Procurement Pilots

- Involves Indigenous-specific tenders on water and wastewater projects
 - Will inform the review of Tendering Policy

Review of Water and Wastewater Protocols and Policies

- Supports continuous improvement to programs while we work in partnership on transfer initiatives

What is Needed

Long-term Water and Wastewater Strategy

- **Continue to work together on:**
 - Determine and assess infrastructure needs
 - Determine and build technical supports and capacity enhancements
 - Identify governance structures for implementation
 - Jointly develop new financial instruments and business processes, to prepare for transfer

- AFN-led engagement process to take place this winter to help inform the strategy

- Ideally, ISC would like to see a strategy that identifies the path towards:
 - First Nations having control of the funding for water and wastewater infrastructure
 - First Nation organizations and/or governments delivering water and wastewater services
 - Ensuring that adequate funding is in place to support First Nation organizations to deliver water and wastewater services sustainably

What is Needed

Legislation

- An essential component of finding lasting solutions to water and wastewater issues on First Nations lands
- Need to establish stringent water and wastewater services standards through a collaborative process and in full partnership with First Nations
- Committed to developing legislation accepted by the Government and First Nations
- Phase 2 of the AFN-led engagement process will move forward this winter
- Next steps include establishing a Joint Working Group that will develop options and recommendations for new legislation
 - Federal membership on the Working Group highlights a whole-of -government approach which will ensure alignment and synergy among intersecting federal initiatives

What is Needed

Asset Management

- A more holistic asset management approach allows for better forecasting and the ability to account for future infrastructure investment requirements
- ISC continues to support communities to develop informed asset management plans

Operations and Maintenance

- Work is underway on broad O&M policy reform
- ISC will continue to engage with partners in the development of methodologies to allocate ongoing funding

Long-term Infrastructure Planning

- ISC to work with partners to develop and action multi-year infrastructure plans and advance transfer activities with Indigenous partners

Next Steps

Long-term Drinking Water Advisories

- Updates the webpage to re-start reporting on progress
- Continue to work with affected First Nations to address their advisories as soon as possible, and address the underlying causes of advisories

Other essential components

- Work with partners to support ongoing engagement and work on:
 - Long-term strategy for water and wastewater
 - Review of safe drinking water legislation
 - Asset management approach
 - Review of O&M policy
 - Development of long-term infrastructure plans