

Water Treatment Plant Upgrades

Mr. Speaker, in the spring of 1999, a small community in southern Ontario called Walkerton made national news because of the deaths and sickness that were linked to contamination in the municipality's drinking water supply. This incident served as a wake-up call for municipalities and governments across Canada to take stock of the state of drinking water supplies in communities across the nation.

Here, in the Northwest Territories, three levels of government including, the Government of Canada, the Government of the Northwest Territories and Community Governments are jointly responsible for ensuring that drinking water is safe for human consumption.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to update the Members on the efforts to upgrade NWT Water Treatment Plants to meet the requirements of the Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality.

The GNWT formed an inter-departmental committee called the NWT Drinking Water Committee. This committee focuses on water-related issues and provides a forum for communication, cooperation, consultation and information exchange, as well as to provide a link to other governmental and non-governmental agencies with interests in drinking water.

The committee set a goal early on to see each community with a modern water treatment plant that would meet the guidelines for Canadian drinking water quality.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to announce that as of October 5, 2020, this goal has been achieved when Wekweètì's new water plant was approved for use. All communities in the NWT that operate a water treatment plant are now capable of meeting the filtration requirements of the national guidelines.

Since 2001, partnerships between the federal government, GNWT and community governments have resulted in 23 upgraded water treatment systems.

- 16 communities have constructed new modern water treatment plants and,
- an additional seven have gone through mid-life retrofits or upgrades to meet the standards.

Community governments have been successfully utilizing federal infrastructure programs over the years, such as the Build Canada Plan, Small Communities Fund, Clean Water and Wastewater Fund and Gas Tax Agreement, to supplement their Community Public Infrastructure Funding from the GNWT to build these water treatment plants.

Mr. Speaker, success can also be seen in community governments' investment in their staff. All 30 NWT water plants are now operated by local residents, 23 of the plants have certified local operators. MACA is actively working with the remaining seven to upgrade the certification of their operators and provide more oversight and support while these operators are training.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the accomplishments we have made to date and all NWT residents can be confident that their drinking water is safe.

Our work is not done. MACA continues to work with community governments to assess their systems, plan for upgrades, and continues to support operators with ongoing training.

Our interdepartmental team will continue to support our communities. The GNWT is committed to providing a coordinated approach that supports water systems including intake, treatment, and distribution. We will continue to ensure safe drinking water for all NWT residents is a priority.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.