

NEWS RELEASE

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NAN, Matawa Acknowledge 10,000-Day Milestone as Neskantaga still without Clean Drinking Water

June 22, 2022

THUNDER BAY, ON: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Derek Fox and Matawa First Nations Management Chief Executive Officer, David Paul Achneepineskum, acknowledge Neskantaga First Nation's June 19, 2022, milestone of 10,000 days under a boil water advisory.

"It is shameful that with all the talk of reconciliation, Neskantaga has surpassed the grim milestone of 10,000 days without clean drinking water," said Grand Chief Derek Fox. "We acknowledge this government's commitments to resolving these issues in our communities, including developing new policies around operation and maintenance funding, but these are vague, open-ended goals without firm timelines or accountability. We need a plan, with a clear path of action, and we ask this government to work with leadership to resolve the issues that Chiefs and Councils have identified."

The community has not had safe drinking water since 1995 – the longest running boil water advisory in Canada. A new water treatment plant was constructed in 2016, but due to equipment and infrastructure failures this continues to be delayed.

"It is tragic that the people of Neskantaga, as some of the First Peoples of the Land, have experienced life for 10,000 days on a boil water advisory. There is no denying that this has come with many unnecessary tolls and costs," said David Paul Achneepineskum, Matawa's Chief Executive Officer. "We have followed this community's issues since their (now decrepit) water treatment plant was built. We have seen how hard the community has worked to address the root causes to the longest BWA in the country and how this has truly challenged government. Short of bringing this issue to the United Nations, Chief and Council are doing everything they can. We truly hope they can work towards meaningfully addressing this human rights violation/major stressor soon so that Indigenous Peoples can have some semblance of a good life on Turtle Island (Canada)."

The 2021 report by the Parliamentary Budget Officer detailed the inadequacy of operation and maintenance funding for First Nations water systems, and the failure of Canada to provide the necessary supports to ensure that First Nations communities have access to safe drinking water. It called for firm funding commitments, which were not addressed in the last federal budget.

Neskantaga First Nation is a remote Oji-Cree community in Treaty No. 9 territory on the shores of Attawapiskat Lake in the District of Kenora, approximately 430 km northeast of Thunder Bay.

More information: <http://www.matawa.on.ca/neskantaga-first-nation-mark-10000-day-in-boil-water-advisory>

Link to PBO report: *Clean Water for First Nations: Is the Government Spending Enough?*: <https://www.pbo-dpb.gc.ca>

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