



ATLANTIC POLICY CONGRESS OF FIRST NATIONS CHIEFS SECRETARIAT

Atlantic First Nations Water Authority Board of Directors meet with Minister Seamus O'Regan, May 3rd, 2019

On May 3, 2019, the Board of Directors of the Atlantic First Nations Water Authority met with the Honourable Seamus O'Regan, Minister of Indigenous Services, regarding the current status of the Atlantic First Nations Water Authority (AFNWA).

Through the vision and leadership of the Atlantic Chiefs, the concept of an Atlantic First Nations Water Authority (AFNWA) was born in 2009. Following several years of scientific research, business planning and engineering studies into the state of First Nations water and wastewater infrastructure and operations, the AFNWA was incorporated. The Authority will be an important transition to First Nation controlled water and wastewater management in First Nation communities in Atlantic Canada.

The Atlantic First Nations Water Authority is a non-profit corporation owned by First Nations and governed by a Board of Directors which includes First Nation Chiefs. Once operational, the AFNWA will be a professional technical service organization responsible for the management and delivery of water and wastewater services in member communities. The AFNWA enjoys wide regional support from First Nations communities across Atlantic Canada who have been actively engaged in the planning and development of the AFNWA.

"We understand from the federal governments mandate letters and throne speeches that water represents a key aspect of reconciliation between the federal government and First Nations communities," says AFN Regional Chief Morley Googoo. "The establishment of an Atlantic First Nations Water Authority would not only result in positive environmental and economic outcomes for our communities but will also be a true Nation-to-Nation solution for water and wastewater issues facing Atlantic First Nations."

"Capacity building opportunities will not only be realized by our community water operators. When the AFNWA is operational, this will be the first Atlantic First Nation organization that focuses solely on technical water and wastewater solutions. Having this type of organization will help to inspire First Nations youth who are pursuing careers in the water sector, science, technology, engineering and math," remarked Andrea Paul, Chief of Pictou Landing First Nation and AFNWA Board Member.

The AFNWA represents a fundamental shift to how First Nations infrastructure would be funded and how decisions are made as the AFNWA will be seeking a 25-year funding agreement from the Federal Government. This would allow First Nations to establish long term asset management plans and to set their own priorities for infrastructure.

“By breaking the short-term budget planning cycle, First Nations will be able to manage their infrastructure with a long-term plan and have those plans executed by our own trusted staff. An increased, long term funding agreement will allow those who have poor water and wastewater quality to fix their issues and ensures that those issues never return” Said Chief Arren Sock and AFNWA Board Member.

“The Government of Canada is committed to helping build Indigenous-owned and controlled institutions,” said Minister O’Regan. “I am pleased that, with the recent lifting of the water advisory in Eel Ground First Nation, there are currently no Long-Term Drinking Water Advisories in Atlantic Canada. However, the important work of maintaining and updating water and wastewater infrastructure on reserve in Atlantic Canada must continue. Indigenous Services Canada is pleased to support the development of the Atlantic First Nations Water Authority and work towards First Nation-led solutions for clean water on reserve in Atlantic Canada.”

The Atlantic First Nations Water Authority is working with its membership to finalize the Authority’s business case and looks forward to continued discussions with the Government of Canada and advancing AFNWA’s development.

About APC

Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat is a policy research and advocacy organization that analyzes and develops culturally relevant alternatives to federal policy for Mi’kmaq, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, and Innu communities and peoples.

For further information contact:

John G. Paul

Executive Director

Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat

Phone: 902-830-5023 (cell) or toll free 1-877-667-4007

Fax: 902-435-8027