



House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance 2016 Pre-Budget Consultation Submission

1. This submission seeks funding for the Safe Water Project, a First Nations initiative that is ending boil water advisories (BWAs) and improving access to clean safe drinking water.
2. In early 2015, Keewaytinook Okimakanak (KO), a Tribal Council serving six First Nations in northwestern Ontario, introduced the Safe Water Project, which has three components:
 - a. Providing focused training aimed at provincial certification of local water and wastewater operators;
 - b. Providing operational support for local water operators as they pursue certification; and
 - c. Deploying Canadian-made and manufactured technology to monitor the quality of water on a continuous basis.
3. KO is a recognized leader in water safety, training over 200 Indigenous and non-Indigenous water operators each year from its provincially accredited Keewaytinook Centre of Excellence in Dryden, Ontario. KO has provided this specialized training since 2001.
4. The Safe Water Project is administered by KO, and is presently operational in five Ontario First Nations communities. It has eliminated three long-standing BWAs (1,000+ days), predicted and prevented numerous BWAs, and will soon lift a BWA that has been in place in one community for over 15 years; one of Canada's longest.
5. The Safe Water Project is the only initiative in Canada that has been able to successfully eliminate BWAs in First Nations communities. It has built capacity and empowered communities to effectively manage their own drinking water, without the need for government or third party intervention, and has also minimized the risk of communities incurring future BWAs.
6. The Safe Water Project has created jobs for First Nations people. Two to three full-time permanent jobs are created for every five communities that are part of the Project.
7. The Assembly of First Nations has endorsed this initiative (Resolution 65-2015).
8. In 2015, an additional 15 Ontario First Nations asked the Government of Canada to fund the expansion of the Safe Water Project to their communities. Of these 15 communities, 60% have persistent BWAs.
9. Across Canada, 74% of First Nations water systems are at medium to high risk of failure. Additionally, there are currently over 120 First Nations communities on some form of BWA.
10. KO is already working with First Nations across Canada to expand the Safe Water Project to their communities, including those with some of the longest-standing BWAs.
11. The Safe Water Project aligns with the following Government of Canada commitments:
 - a. Eliminating BWAs in First Nations communities within five years;
 - b. Making public investments in infrastructure to spur economic growth, job creation and prosperity;
 - c. Promoting reconciliation through the renewal of a nation-to-nation relationship based on the recognition of rights, respect, co-operation and partnership.
12. The Safe Water Project is a shovel-ready and shovel-worthy initiative created by First Nations for First Nations that has long-lasting economic and social impacts.
13. A five-year phased approach to eliminate BWAs is proposed, which will provide safe drinking water to 325 First Nations communities across Canada, including those communities with BWAs and those with water systems at medium to high risk of failure. This approach will also create an estimated 130 to 195 full-time permanent jobs for First Nations people.
14. The budget for this proposed approach is \$156,960,000 (over five years), which includes \$64,800,000 in capital costs (infrastructure) and \$92,160,000 in operations and maintenance costs (training and operational support personnel). Detailed budget figures are available upon request.