



ATLANTIC POLICY CONGRESS OF FIRST NATIONS CHIEFS SECRETARIAT

First Nations Clean Water Initiative – Atlantic Region Breakfast, July 10, 2017

On July 10, 2017, the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat (APC) held a breakfast meeting at Dalhousie University to discuss the First Nations Clean Water Initiative -Atlantic Region (FNCWI-AR) that aims to ensure safe drinking water for First Nations communities now, and for generations to come. During the breakfast, APC welcomed several partners and stakeholders together, including Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada and other federal representatives, to discuss the barriers, opportunities and next steps of the initiative which includes development of an Atlantic First Nations Water Authority.

Through the vision and leadership of the Atlantic Chiefs, the concept of the First Nations Clean Water Initiative, and by extension, an Atlantic First Nations Water Authority (AFNWA) was born in 2009. This initiative included developing governance structures for the Atlantic First Nations Water Authority, determine financing models, and researching and developing drinking water and wastewater regulations. Furthermore, the Water Authority plans to be a First Nation organization, constructed, owned and operated by First Nations. The Water Authority will not be a political organization, rather, it will be a progressive utility focused on the provision of water and wastewater services. Concurrent with the work over the last 8 years, the team has also focused priority around ensuring widespread support from a majority of the First Nations communities throughout the region.

The morning started with opening remarks from Dalhousie's Vice President of Research, Dr. John Newhook. Dr. Newhook spoke about the important relationship between First Nations and the University. Dalhousie has been a long standing partner of APC, having collaborated on all elements of this Initiative with Dr. Graham Gagnon at Dalhousie's Center for Water Resource Studies (CWRS).



Carl Yates, General Manager of Halifax Water (left), Mayor Mike Savage (centre) and Rod Burgar, President of Accelerator Inc.

This was followed by a welcome by Halifax Mayor Mike Savage. Mayor Savage discussed the advantages of a professionally managed, arm's length water utility. Furthermore, Mayor Savage spoke in support of the initiative, stating how important it is to work in partnership to forge a new relationship with First Nations leaders and communities.

APC Co-Chair, Chief Candice Paul, provided an overview of the Chiefs' role in developing an Atlantic First Nations Water Authority, and the history of the Initiative. Chief Paul spoke about the benefits of the project, stating, *"The most apparent benefit to Atlantic First Nations with the establishment of a pan-Atlantic Water Authority is increased public health and safety with the improvement in quality of drinking water and wastewater" and that "if we work in partnership with a true nation-to-nation approach, we can achieve our goals."*



John Paul (left) Chief Sidney Peters (centre) and Chief Matilda Ramjattan

Chief Sidney Peters of Glooscap First Nations spoke about the value of the First Nations Clean Water Initiative. Chief Peters provided an overview of current activities under the initiative, and discussed some of the barriers that First Nations Communities have faced trying to achieve clean and safe drinking water and wastewater. Chief Peters stated, *"Over the years, the Government of Canada has put in place a number of initiatives for First Nations water in the face of no legislated regulation; However, First Nations water is still of poorer quality than that of water quality in the rest of the Country".*

The attendees also heard remarks from Rod Bugar, president of Accelerator Inc., on the importance of seizing the momentum the project has gained to ensure its success. John Paul, Executive Director of APC, provided context on regional policy challenges and perspectives. These challenges include the need for enforceable regulations and long-term, predictable funding.

The APC member Chiefs indicated that they look forward to working in partnership with all levels of government on this important initiative. The next steps include: finalizing recommendations for a corporate structure of the Atlantic First Nations Water Authority, a comprehensive analysis of water operations and maintenance funding for Atlantic First Nations communities, and an engineering analysis on the current state of water and wastewater infrastructure.

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 30 Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy and Innu communities and peoples. If you have any questions, please direct them to: John Paul, Executive Director. He can be reached by e-mail, John.Paul@apcfn.ca, or by phone at (902)-435-8021 and (902)-830-5023.

