

# Keewaytinook Okimakanak Tribal Council

## Tribal Council Report Phase II - Executive Summary

### Introduction

The Ontario Clean Water Agency (OCWA) was retained by the Ontario First Nations Technical Services Corporation (OFNTSC) to carry out an overall general assessment study of existing water and sewage facilities in First Nation communities with regard to the magnitude and scope of existing and potential problems in terms of health and safety risks.

In March 2001, a representative from OCWA traveled to five of the six communities within the Keewaytinook Okimakanak Tribal Council (KOTC) and met with the facility operators. A site visit of the sixth community was not required because the community has no communal services.

From interviews with the operators and the completion of questionnaires, information was collected by OCWA and compiled into Community Reports, included in Appendix "A". At the time of the visits, walkthrough tours of the facilities were conducted by OCWA and observations were recorded in the reports. This First Nation Report summarizes the findings from the Community Reports.

### Community Services

The KOTC is comprised of six communities of which four are located 120 to 175 km north of Red Lake. These include North Spirit Lake, McDowell Lake, Poplar Hill and Deer Lake, which has special access by air and by ice access road in the winter. One community, Fort Severn, is located 850 km north of Thunder Bay and one, Keewaywin, is located approximately 225 km northeast of Red Lake. Based upon the Capital Asset Inventory System (CAIS) and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) reports, the total KOTC on-site population amounts to 2,438 and there are 483 houses of which:

- 175 houses (36%) are serviced by communal water and 308 houses (64%) are serviced by water holding tanks and trucked water.
- 106 houses (22%) are serviced by communal sewage, 177 houses (37%) are serviced by truck hauling sewage from individual holding tanks, and 200 houses (41%) have other sewage disposal services.

### Risk Assessment

It was reported that one Boil Water Advisory has been placed on the North Spirit Lake, Fort Severn, and Keewaywin communities.

OCWA's assessment identifies that there is an overall high risk for the North Spirit Lake and Deer Lake communal sewage systems because effluent testing is not conducted.

The following communities are medium risk because of potential high THMs in the treated water (North Spirit Lake and Poplar Hill) and due to low chlorine residual and turbidity problems (Fort Severn), and incomplete effluent testing (Poplar Hill –sewage).

- North Spirit Lake - communal water and sewage system;
- Fort Severn - communal water system; and
- Poplar Hill - communal water and sewage systems.

The report identifies medium risk issues that should be attended to in the short term. These issues include design and capacity assessments, record drawings and manuals, and backup power supplies, lack of main valve operation and maintenance programs.

### **Definition of Risk**

High risk issues may include non-compliance events, broken or malfunctioning equipment, lack of necessary monitoring equipment, inadequate sampling/testing/reporting, safety issues, and lack of operator training. These items should be acted on immediately.

The report also identifies medium risk issues that should be attended to in the short term. These issues include design and capacity assessments, record drawings and manuals, backup power supplies, and the proximity of sewage effluent discharges and water intakes.

Long term planning objectives have also been identified in the report. These objectives are to ensure that a support structure is put in place to not only bring the facilities into compliance with approved operating standards, but also through operator training, testing and reporting protocols, planning and capital improvements, to maintain that level of operational excellence. This approach will ensure the long term health and safety of both the communities and the operators while also maintaining the value of the capital assets.

### **Recommendations**

The report recommends immediate action be taken on the high risk issues with attention being given to the medium risk issues. Concurrently, the long term planning issues should be formulated and implemented.

From OCWA's observations in the communities, it is recommended that consideration be given to further studies of the water distribution systems and the sewage collection systems. In addition, the individual water and sewage holding tanks, and individual water and sewage services should also be reviewed on a continuing basis.

The information available through the CAIS and INAC reports was found to be not up to date and/or in agreement. It is recommended that these reports be updated and reconciled.

The foremost recommendation would focus on operator training programs together with a reporting structure to ensure both operating compliance and effective response to changing conditions.