

NORTH BATTLEFORD WATER INQUIRY

Commission Recommendations	Government's Response to Recommendations
1. That the criteria for surface water treatment plants reporting to SERM be standardized for the province, and not different between Eco-regions.	Accept. This will be completed this fiscal year.
2. That the City of North Battleford commence construction for a new sewage treatment plant at a location downstream from the surface water treatment plant by no later than the spring of 2003.	Concur. The City is currently selecting a consultant to design the new sewage treatment plant. Their proposal requires that the design be completed by 2002 with construction beginning in 2003 and completed by 2004.
3. Each permit to operate a surface water treatment plant should require as a condition to operate that there exist a quality control/quality assurance written policy in place that is acceptable to the regulator.	Accept. Amendments to <i>The Water Pollution Control and Waterworks Regulations</i> will make provision for quality control/quality assurance by waterworks owners a legal requirement. Saskatchewan Environment will undertake the development of a guideline to aid owners and operators in understanding this requirement.
4. That each permit to operate a surface water treatment plant specify as a condition for operation the record system that shall be maintained within the plant, and also specify a monthly internal review process to ensure that operating parameters within the permit are consistently being met.	Accept. Amendments to <i>The Water Pollution Control and Waterworks Regulations</i> will make provision for record keeping at waterworks and specify the frequency of review.
5. That the City of North Battleford prepare a written safe drinking water policy that commits to the principle of quality of water over quantity of water, that commits to maintaining best industry practices in its water treatment plants, and that encourages the manager of the water treatment plant to report directly to city council whenever he has concerns that affect the safety of drinking water which are not being addressed by city administration officials.	Concur.
6. That one of the committees of city council be assigned responsibility for implementing the city's safe drinking water policy.	Concur.
7. That this committee receive from the manager of the water treatment plant a written report quarterly on the operations of the water treatment plant during the previous three months. Said report should include the results of all sampling conducted during the period, any non-compliances with the operating permit, and any other types of problem that an oversight committee would be interested in hearing.	Concur. Transparency in reporting processes is in the best interest of residents, municipalities and regulators
8. That the subcommittee of council prepare a report annually for city council on the state of drinking water in the city, which report shall be part of the public record.	Concur. Regulatory amendments will require owners of waterworks to report annually to the public they serve on both the quality of their drinking water and the owner's compliance with Saskatchewan Environment's sample submission requirements.
9. That the City of North Battleford raise its water utility rates at least to the median level of the rates charged by the 13 Saskatchewan cities.	Concur. Legislative amendments will require municipalities to have a pricing and investment strategy in place for water treatment systems and report publicly on this strategy by 2005.
10. That in the future the performance requirements expected of a surface water treatment plant be itemized in its permit to operate, and include not only the parameters to be met, but also the quality	Accept. Performance requirements will be itemized in the permits to operate. Regulatory amendments will make provision for quality control/quality assurance by waterworks owners a legal requirement. Saskatchewan Environment will undertake the

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assurance and quality control procedures that are to be in place.	development of a guideline to aid owners and operators in understanding this requirement.
<p>11. To better ensure that surface water treatment plants remain capable in both infrastructure and operations year after year, that they be inspected by the regulator at least biannually by a person knowledgeable in surface water treatment best industry practices. This inspection should include: a record review to determine the level of compliance with the parameters for performance and sampling requirements set out in the permit; a review of the plant's processes and their operational effectiveness; an interview with the manager; and an interview with at least one operator.</p> <p>(a) That a detailed inspection report be produced that records any non-compliance with permit requirements, recommends any improvements to be made and a timetable for the same, and offers an overall grading of where the plant fits in the spectrum of quality for surface water treatment plants.</p> <p>(b) That a copy of the inspection report be delivered to the manager of the plant, to the city commissioner or his or her equivalent, and to the medical health officer for the health district.</p>	<p>Accept. Saskatchewan Environment will conduct 1 to 2 inspections at each municipal water treatment plant each year and 1 inspection at each municipal wastewater treatment plant each year. Detailed inspection report recommendations will be implemented.</p>
<p>12. That the City of North Battleford in the next six months:</p> <p>(a) install a supervisory control and data acquisition system (SCADA) in the surface water treatment plant;</p> <p>(b) retain a management consultant to assess the adequacy of the management component and the operator component of the plants department and to report within a further two months. It is recommended the report produced be tabled at city council as a public document, and a copy provided to SERM; and</p> <p>(c) commission an engineering study to determine if the city's reservoir capacity is adequate, bearing in mind the desirable goal of not operating the surface water treatment plant for short periods of time only.</p>	<p>Concur. Saskatchewan Environment will be in regular contact with the city on these issues.</p>
<p>13. That the Government of Saskatchewan approve SERM's request to fund an integrated provincial water quality database in the fiscal year 2002-03.</p>	<p>Accept. Saskatchewan Environment will begin implementing the integrated provincial water quality database this fiscal year.</p>
<p>14. That the new data system incorporate the permit requirements for each licensee with a flagging system to identify communities that have not submitted the required samples and produce a printout on a weekly basis of all such non-compliances.</p> <p>(a) That all non-compliances be followed up, within seven days, with the chief municipal administrator or his or her designate, who may</p>	<p>Accept in Principle. A flagging system will be implemented. Compliance requirements vary by size of community; therefore, the 7-day time frame may not be appropriate for all communities. Saskatchewan Environment will further evaluate the non-compliance timeline criteria in this fiscal year.</p>

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<p>not be the manager or other person operating the water treatment facility.</p> <p>(b) That with respect to a missed bacteriological sample, the municipality be advised to submit one within seven days. In the event the municipality fails to do so a PDWA be issued.</p>	
<p>15. That in the event of persistent non-compliance by a municipality with respect to bacteriological sampling requirements, the regulator should appoint new management (see page 288), or should rescind the permit to operate the facility.</p>	<p>Accept. The <i>Environmental Management and Protection Act</i> provides this authority to Saskatchewan Environment and Saskatchewan Environment will exercise this authority.</p>
<p>16. That a provincial protocol for water-borne disease investigation be prepared, distributed, and adopted by all health districts in the province and that this protocol include:</p> <p>(a) the establishment of a task force in each district which is to be notified by the medical health officer, or in his/her absence a public health inspector, whenever the health district is experiencing an enteric disease outbreak that could be caused by a water-borne pathogen;</p> <p>(b) that this protocol emphasize that the first hypothesis to be tested is whether or not it could be a water-borne pathogen, which means automatically checking with personnel at the water treatment facilities and with the regulator who should have a member on the task force;</p> <p>(c) when cases appear which are geographically close to a regional centre such as North Battleford that any additional persons or family members identified by the confirmed case who have also experienced a similar illness be interviewed in detail as to when and where they have consumed water for the period of at least ten days before the onset of illness;</p> <p>(d) that if the enteric disease reporting form is to continue to be used as a routine form, a new, much more detailed, form be available for use by investigators whenever the investigation involves a possible outbreak of water-borne disease; and</p> <p>(e) when in any health district there is a difference of opinion or uncertainty based on the available evidence as to whether or not a PDWA or boil water order should be issued after consultation with the task force, the medical health officer should contact forthwith the provincial public health officer or deputy minister to seek advice.</p>	<p>Accept. Saskatchewan Health will develop a provincial water-borne disease investigation protocol in collaboration with the health district medical health officers.</p>
<p>17. That each health district establish sentinel pharmacies to report any increase in anti-diarrheal medications. This is recommended by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia, and seems necessary when so many patients experiencing enteric disease self-medicate. This alert can also result in a request to physicians to increase</p>	<p>Concur. This recommendation is directed to health districts. However, Sask Health will request the Medical Health Officers Council of Saskatchewan to review the potential effectiveness of sentinel pharmacies and report its recommendations by fall of 2002.</p>

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stool sampling.	
18. That a provincial protocol be developed for use by all health districts as to when stool samples should be requested from a patient and forwarded to a laboratory. The inquiry did not hear enough medical evidence to determine what such protocol should be, but clearly in this case there were not enough stool samples taken and the ability to diagnose disease was hampered.	Accept. Saskatchewan Health will develop a provincial water-borne disease investigation protocol in collaboration with the health district medical health officers. The protocol will address submission of stool samples.
19. That the provincial Department of Health prepare for distribution to all health districts guidelines, including sample documents where appropriate, for all action to be taken by a health district once a PDWA or a boil water order is issued. The guidelines should cover the points outlined in the memorandum dated October 2, 2000 prepared by the public health inspectors. (See page 190).	Accept. Saskatchewan Health will develop and distribute these guidelines.
20. That each health district put in place a system that requires: (a) that all reports from laboratories identifying enteric disease be reviewed daily between Monday and Friday, whether the communicable disease coordinator is present at work or not; (b) that instances of enteric disease be recorded in the communicable diseases log on the date the result is submitted, not the date a person recorded it; (c) that one public health inspector assume the primary role for investigating enteric disease, with a designated alternate for when the 'primary investigator is not available; (d) that the primary and alternate investigator receive training additional to other public health inspectors in the investigation of enteric disease, and in particular in interviewing techniques; and (e) that each district establish a contingency plan that will mobilize a number of additional persons to the investigation team in the event of an outbreak. The logical persons to be so added would be public health nurses who also have some training in interviewing techniques.	Accept in principle. This recommendation is directed to health districts. However, Saskatchewan Health will have discussions with medical health officers and other public health staff to ensure disease investigation and outbreak protocols, including reporting systems, are updated.
21. That public health officers for the health districts be briefed annually by a SERM representative for the purpose of learning the state of water treatment systems in the district, and what the potential may be for problems that might lead to disease.	Accept. Saskatchewan Environment will provide annual briefings.
22. That the provincial government take steps to ensure a better supply of public health inspectors in the province of Saskatchewan. These steps should include either greater educational opportunity for persons wishing to become public health inspectors to be educated in the province, or financial assistance for those persons who must leave the province to obtain the appropriate education.	Accept. In April, 2002 the Provincial Market Supplement Committee, representing Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations (SAHO), district employers and Health Sciences union, will complete its study of public health inspector recruitment and retention issues, particularly in relation to compensation. Health Sciences Union and SAHO have reached a tentative agreement increasing current wages by 3% in each of the next 3 years. Saskatchewan Health has worked with the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (SIFC) to establish a

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	public health inspector school which received accreditation in March 2002. This will add to the supply of public health inspectors in Saskatchewan. Sask Health also offers public health inspector bursaries.
23. That in the future, if SERM wishes to bring to the attention of operators information it considers important, it do so by letter or bulletin, stating the information and why it is important.	Accept. Saskatchewan Environment will undertake improvements for better direct communication with operators through direct mailing, direct bulletins, relationship building during inspections and other opportunities. Saskatchewan Environment will also seek the aid of the Saskatchewan Water and Wastewater Association (SWWA) and the Operator Certification Board (OCB) in carrying out this recommendation.
24. That the government amend the operator certification regulations to provide that, after the first renewal, each operator must take a certain number of continuing education credits to qualify for the second renewal, and each renewal thereafter.	Accept. Amendments to <i>The Water Pollution Control and Waterworks Regulations</i> will require completion of continuing operator education or training programs as a condition of ongoing certification.
25. That the government ensure there are sufficient continuing education courses available to meet the needs of operator continuing education.	Accept. Saskatchewan Environment will review the level and scope of continuing education opportunities within the province and work with these organizations to bring the needed educational courses into place.
26. That EMPA be amended to: (a) establish a separate drinking water quality unit in SERM, whether it is called a branch, a directorate, or a section, with its own "director"; (b) provide the unit with all of the jurisdiction EMPA currently provides SERM over waterworks and, in addition, provide the unit with a mandate and jurisdiction to protect watershed and ground water sources of drinking water; (c) provide that within the unit there exist a separate compliance section; and (d) provide that the unit produce an annual report to the legislature on the state of drinking water quality in the province.	<p>Accept. With respect to part 26(a), Saskatchewan Environment will establish a stand-alone drinking water management unit, led by a Senior Manager, responsible for drinking water programs in the province.</p> <p>Accept in Principle. With respect to part 26(b), EMPA currently provides Saskatchewan Environment, and by extension the new drinking water management unit, with the mandate and jurisdiction over waterworks.</p> <p>The government is adopting a comprehensive solution to watershed and ground water source protection by consolidating activities related to watershed and source water protection. In order to provide enhanced watershed stewardship and protection of source waters from contamination, the watershed related activities of Sask Water, the Saskatchewan Wetlands Conservation Corporation (SWCC) and Environment will be consolidated into a new Saskatchewan Watershed Authority, which will report to the Department of Environment.</p> <p>The mandate of this Authority will encompass watershed planning, reduction/elimination of contaminants, protection of aquifers, conservation of wetlands, water allocation, care and operation of provincial water management infrastructure, flood and drought policy, public awareness and monitoring the ecological health of aquatic ecosystems. The Watershed Authority will work toward balancing competing interests in watersheds (upstream and downstream users of water supplies and land uses that impact water) by engaging these interests in planning for the use of the watershed. This approach provides opportunity to further build, through consultation and involvement, a regulatory regime to protect watersheds.</p>

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	<p>Accept. With respect to part 26(c), a compliance section will be included within the drinking water management unit. This activity will be delivered by section and regional inspection and enforcement staff.</p> <p>Accept. With respect to part 26(d), this will be the responsibility of the drinking water management section.</p>
<p>27. That the regulator pursue a comprehensive inspection policy of water treatment facilities and apply a rigorous abatement-enforcement compliance policy on all water treatment facilities.</p>	<p>Accept. Saskatchewan Environment will develop a compliance and enforcement policy for water treatment.</p>
<p>28. That <i>The Water Pollution Control and Waterworks Amendment Regulations</i> be amended:</p> <p>(a) to provide that in the event of persistent non-compliance by a municipality, the regulator may order the replacement of the existing management or operators and may temporarily hire replacements as required at the municipality's expense; and</p> <p>(b) to make it an offence to knowingly operate a water treatment facility in contravention of the operational requirements set out in the operating permit.</p>	<p>Accept. The <i>Environmental Management and Protection Act</i> provides this authority to Saskatchewan Environment and Saskatchewan Environment will exercise this authority.</p>

Additional Actions

1. Transfer of all regulatory activities for approval and licensing from Sask Water to Environment.
2. Regulation of semi-public water systems by Health, through passage of <i>The Health Hazards Regulations</i> in 2002 (includes minimum testing and treatment requirements).
3. Educational material and communication for private system owners on the need to test drinking water twice yearly.
4. Sask Water's mandate and role will be modified such that it becomes a self-sustaining CIC subsidiary delivering water and wastewater treatment operations and providing consulting services on a commercial basis to Saskatchewan communities and industries.
5. Change CSIP criteria for funding municipalities to require a certified operator as a condition of funding approval; require funded drinking water projects to produce water that meets the Canadian Drinking Water Guidelines; set priorities and financial incentives for projects that are part of a regional supply system or that involve collaboration among three or more communities over separate projects; and require that project applications include a financial plan incorporating pricing and investment strategies that include provisions to cover full water system operating costs and timely replacement of capital assets.
6. Ongoing involvement in federal/provincial municipal wastewater initiatives as a means to protect water sources and watersheds.
7. Consultation towards legislative amendments to require municipalities to undertake the development of bylaws and watershed protection plans for their drinking water supplies.
8. A public education campaign about the value of water.
9. Conduct omnibus polling to measure public attitudes regarding water.