



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Eabametoong First Nation declares State of Emergency

July 15, 2019 – Eabametoong First Nation

Eabametoong First Nation Chief Harvey Yesno and Council have declared a State of Emergency as alarmingly high levels of contamination have been detected in the remote community’s water distribution system.

“The discovery of high levels of trihalomethanes, combined with and ongoing issues with our water and wastewater systems, has forced us to declare a State of Emergency to protect the health of our community. Many of these issues have been ongoing for decades, but we are especially concerned about the effects of trihalomethanes on our most vulnerable community members, including newborn children, youth, the elderly and infirmed,” said Chief Harvey Yesno. “It is unacceptable that Eabametoong has been on a boil water advisory for 18 years. Progress has been made to upgrade our infrastructure, but our members cannot be expected to consume water that fails to meet Ontario drinking water standards. We have a responsibility to protect the health of our members and will do everything we can until our water issues are permanently resolved.”

Independent water quality lab tests taken on June 28 to June 30 indicate high levels of trihalomethanes (THMs) in the distribution system exceeding the allowance of 100 micrograms per litre Ontario Drinking Water Objectives by 122-182%. The community has initiated an Emergency Response Plan and has been forced to rely on Reverse Osmosis Units to draw water for drinking and cooking. Water drawn from household taps has contained a noticeable foul smell and taste.

Chief Yesno has delivered formal notice of the State of Emergency to Indigenous Services Minister Seamus O’Regan, and has requested immediate action from the Government of Canada.

Below are preliminary results for water samples collected June 28-30, 2019 at the water treatment plant and at the hotel showing exceedances of Ontario Drinking Water Objectives:

Parameters	Units	Guideline	28-June-2019	28-June-2019	30-Jun-2019	30-Jun-2019
		ODWS	019 ^a	020 ^b	026 ^b	027 ^a
Location			WTP	Hotel	Hotel	WTP
Bromodichloromethane	µg/L	-	2.2	2.6	2.7	2.3
Chloroform	µg/L	-	220	260	280	230
Total THMs	µg/L	100*	222.2	262.6	282.7	232.3

*The maximum acceptable concentration (MAC) for trihalomethanes (THMs) in drinking water is 100 µg/L based on a four quarter moving annual average of test results. Trihalomethanes are the most widely occurring synthetic organics found in chlorinated drinking water. The four most commonly detected trihalomethanes in drinking water are chloroform, bromodichloromethane, chlorodibromomethane and bromoform. Primarily, trihalomethanes in drinking water are produced by the reaction of chlorine and the naturally occurring organics (precursors) left in the water after filtration

The community's new water treatment plant was fast-tracked using a Design Build Construction to meet the Government of Canada's target to end the community's long-standing water advisory declared on August 1, 2001. Three new community diesel generator sets are sitting in storage waiting to be installed as funding from Indigenous Services Canada has not been approved.

Other infrastructure, however, hasn't been upgraded such as the water intake, which is located too close to shore. This new wastewater system will flow a greater capacity through the system, but the lift station at one end of the community is too small to handle the upgraded capacity. Lift stations can't support the increases in housing and other infrastructure as the community grows.

The main community sewage lift station is overcapacity and subject to overflow into Eabamet Lake, which is the source of the community drinking water. The new water plant is pumping more water into the distribution system resulting in more wastewater and causing the four lift stations to work exceptionally hard, especially lift station #2. The community has submitted an application to Indigenous Services Canada to expand the lift station, but funding has not been approved.

Eabametoong First Nation (Fort Hope) is a remote First Nation community situated on the north shore of Eabamet Lake, part of the Albany River Drainage basin, 360 kilometers northeast of Thunder Bay. The community's on-reserve population is 1,592.

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