

INDIGENOUS Services Canada DETAILED ACTION PLAN

to the recommendations of the Report 3—Access to Safe Drinking Water in First Nations Communities—Indigenous Services Canada Report of the 2021 Reports 1 to 5 of the Auditor General of Canada

Report Ref. No.	OAG Recommendation	Departmental Response	Description of Final Expected Outcome/Result	Expected Final Completion Date	Key Interim Milestones (Description/Dates)	Responsible Organization/ Point of Contact (Name, Position, Tel #)	<i>Indicator of Achievement</i> (For Committee Use Only)
1	<p>3.40 Indigenous Services Canada should work with First Nations communities to strengthen efforts to eliminate all long-term drinking water advisories and prevent new ones from occurring.</p>	<p><i>In the Fall Economic Statement 2020, the Government of Canada committed an additional \$309 million to continue the work to address all remaining long-term drinking water advisories as soon as possible. Indigenous Services Canada will continue to actively work with First Nations to address drinking water issues, including by assessing the impact of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic on timelines and supporting the advancement of projects in a way that respects public health measures. This work is a continuation of the ongoing strategy to address each and every long-term drinking water advisory on public systems on reserves.</i></p> <p><i>The department will continue to support First Nations to prevent advisories from becoming long term by providing sustainable investments to address short-term advisories, expand delivery systems, build the capacity of and retain local water operators, and support regular monitoring and testing.</i></p> <p><i>The department will continue to advocate for a continuation of program funding with central agencies to ensure continued support for water and wastewater services in First Nations with the objective of obtaining long-term stable funding.</i></p>	<p>All long-term drinking water advisories in effect on public systems on reserve since November 2015 are resolved</p>	<p>FY 2023-24, depending on progress on projects and COVID-19 pandemic health and safety measures</p>	<p>1.1. Through the LT DWA Action Plan, ISC will work with First Nations to invest \$309 million towards projects to address all remaining LT DWAs on public systems on reserve (<u>Expected Completion: March 2022</u>)</p> <p>1.2. Through the LT DWA Action Plan, ISC will work with First Nations to invest future year program funding that may be obtained towards projects to address all remaining LT DWAs on public systems on reserve (<u>on-going, depending on progress on projects and COVID-19 pandemic health and safety measures</u>)</p> <p>1.3. Through the LT DWA Action Plan, ISC will continue to track ST DWAs, and support First Nations to address these advisories before they become long-term (<u>ongoing</u>)</p> <p>1.4. Working with First Nations, new investments in O&M from Budget 2019 (\$605.6 million over four years, starting in 2020–2021, and \$184.9 million per year ongoing) and the 2020 Fall Economic Statement (\$616.3 million over six years, and \$114.1 million per year thereafter) will be used to stabilize funding for First Nations, the Circuit Rider Training Program and other Regional initiatives, including through the establishment of multi-year funding agreements to strengthen support programs (<u>Expected Completion: July 2021</u>)</p> <p>1.5. Working with First Nations, ISC will support improved operator salaries through better communication of typical salary ranges, and will encourage First Nations to allocate a portion of their increased O&M funding towards improving operator retention (<u>Expected Completion: March 2022</u>)</p> <p>1.6. Working with First Nations, ISC will ensure monitoring programs continue to provide a final check on the overall safety of drinking water at tap in public water systems, semi-public water systems, cisterns and individual wells in First Nations communities (<u>ongoing</u>)</p>	<p>Name: Christiane Fox</p> <p>Position: Deputy Minister, Indigenous Services Canada</p> <p>Tel #: 819-956-5523</p> <p>Email: christiane.fox@canada.ca</p>	

					1.7. ISC will continue to seek opportunities to obtain long-term stable funding for water and wastewater to ensure continued support beyond the \$553.4 million in funding for FY 2021-22 committed in the 2020 Fall Economic Statement (<u>ongoing</u>)		
2	<p><i>3.54: Indigenous Services Canada should work with First Nations communities to implement long-term solutions to ensure that water systems in First Nations communities provide ongoing access to safe drinking water.</i></p>	<p><i>Working with First Nations, Indigenous Services Canada will continue to support long-term measures to ensure that First Nations have ongoing access to safe drinking water.</i></p>	<p>Long-term solutions are in place to ensure sustainable access to potable water in all First Nations affected by a long-term drinking water advisory on a public system since 2015</p>	FY 2025-26	<p>2.1 ISC will continue to work with First Nations to implement projects that address the long-term water needs of all communities affected by LT DWAs since 2015 (<u>Expected Completion: March 2026</u>)</p> <p>2.2 ISC will continue to seek opportunities to obtain long-term stable funding for water and wastewater to ensure continued support beyond the \$553.4 million in funding for FY 2021-22 committed in the 2020 Fall Economic Statement (refer to item 1.7) (<u>ongoing</u>)</p> <p>2.3 Working with First Nations, new investments in O&M from Budget 2019 (\$605.6 million over four years, starting in 2020–2021, and \$184.9 million per year ongoing) and the 2020 Fall Economic Statement (\$616.3 million over six years, and \$114.1 million per year thereafter) will be used to stabilize funding for First Nations, the Circuit Rider Training Program and other Regional initiatives, including through establishment of multi-year funding agreements to strengthen support programs (refer to item 1.4) (<u>Expected Completion: July 2021</u>)</p> <p>2.4 ISC will work with First Nations partners to continue to support capacity building and operator training initiatives, such as regional water and wastewater hubs, and will support new and/or expanded First Nation-led initiatives such as regional operator associations, and training programs (<u>ongoing</u>)</p> <p>2.5 ISC will continue to support the AFN-led engagement process for the review of the 2013 Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act. The current round of AFN-led engagements with First Nations were completed at the end of March 2021. Another round of engagements led by the</p>		
		<p><i>The department will continue to work with central agencies to ensure that long-term stable funding is available to commit toward these projects and to address the long-term needs of communities.</i></p>					
		<p><i>The department will continue to support operator training and retention and will work with partners to expand capacity building and operator support for First Nations. The department will continue to provide hands-on support to operators through the Circuit Rider Training Program.</i></p>					

		<p><i>Eliminating long-term drinking water advisories is only one aspect of ensuring sustainable access to clean drinking water. Indigenous Services Canada will continue to support First Nations-led engagement processes for the review of the 2013 Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act with the objective of developing new water legislation accepted by both the federal government and First Nations and for the co-development of a long-term strategy to ensure that drinking water systems are sustainable.</i></p>			<p>AFN is expected in fiscal year 2021-22 (<u>Expected Completion: March 2022</u>)</p> <p>2.6 ISC will co-develop a legislative framework through a Joint Working Group. Approval of legislation is required, to enable development of a regulatory framework (<u>Expected Completion: December 2022</u>)</p> <p>2.7 ISC will continue to support the AFN-led engagement process for the co-development of a long-term strategy to ensure that drinking water systems are sustainable. The current round of AFN-led engagements with First Nations were completed at the end of March 2021, with further support to be provided in 2021-22 as the AFN-led engagement process continues (<u>Expected Completion: March 2022</u>)</p> <p>2.8 ISC will support the co-development of a long-term strategy for water and wastewater infrastructure (<u>Expected Completion: Winter 2022-23</u>)</p>	
3	<p><i>3.61: Indigenous Services Canada should work with First Nations to proactively identify and address underlying deficiencies in water systems to prevent recurring advisories.</i></p>	<p><i>Indigenous Services Canada will continue to work with First Nations to conduct performance inspections of water systems annually and asset condition assessments every 3 years to identify deficiencies. The department will proactively work with communities to address those deficiencies and prevent recurring advisories.</i></p> <p><i>Through the funding announced as part of the Fall Economic Statement 2020, the department will further increase support for the operation and maintenance of water systems, enabling First Nations to better sustain their infrastructure. The department will continue to support operator training and retention and will work with partners to expand capacity building and operator support for First Nations. The department will continue to provide hands-on support to operators through the Circuit Rider Training Program.</i></p>	<p>Mechanisms are in place to improve the sustainability of water systems in First Nations communities.</p>	FY 2022-23	<p>3.1 ISC will continue to conduct performance inspections of water systems annually and asset condition assessments every three years, including expanding the <i>extended asset condition assessment</i> process to better support planning for O&M and recapitalization needs. Based on these assessments ISC will continue to work with communities to address any identified deficiencies, while respecting health and safety measures implemented by communities during the COVID-19 pandemic (<u>ongoing</u>)</p> <p>3.2 ISC has allocated \$140 million in one-time O&M top-ups to First Nations for fiscal year 2020-21 (2020 Fall Economic Statement increase to O&M funding) to bring funding levels up to (or beyond) 100% of formula funding. To allocate funding in future years, beginning in 2021-22, ISC will develop a new O&M funding methodology to better reflect actual O&M costs and support the ability to implement a new O&M policy (<u>Expected Completion: July 2021</u>)</p> <p>3.3 ISC will work with First Nations partners to continue to support capacity building and operator training initiatives, such as regional water and wastewater hubs, and will support new</p>	

		<p>The department will continue to support the First Nations–led engagement process for the development of a long-term strategy to ensure that drinking water systems are sustainable.</p>			<p>and/or expanded First Nation-led initiatives such as regional operator associations, and training programs (refer to item 2.4) (<u>ongoing</u>)</p> <p>3.4 ISC will continue to support the AFN–led engagement process for the co-development of a long-term strategy to ensure that drinking water systems are sustainable. The current round of AFN-led engagements with First Nations were completed at the end of March 2021, with further support to be provided in 2021-22 as the AFN-led engagement process continues (refer to item 2.7) (<u>Expected Completion: March 2022</u>)</p> <p>3.5 ISC will support the co-development of a long-term strategy for water and wastewater infrastructure (refer to item 2.8) (<u>Expected Completion: Winter 2022-23</u>)</p> <p>3.6 ISC will continue to work with First Nations to advance O&M policy reform as part of broader work towards an asset management approach (<u>Expected Completion: Summer 2022</u>)</p>	
		<p>Furthermore, the department will continue to support the development of a more holistic asset management approach that allows for better forecasting and the ability to account for future infrastructure investment requirements while engaging on operations and maintenance policy reform.</p>				
4	<p>3.77: Indigenous Services Canada, in consultation with First Nations, should make it a priority to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify the amount of funding needed by First Nations to operate and maintain drinking water infrastructure • amend the existing policy and funding formula to provide First Nations with sufficient funding to operate and maintain drinking water infrastructure 	<p>Indigenous Services Canada will continue to work with First Nations partners to ensure that sufficient water and wastewater operations and maintenance funding is provided and to amend associated policies.</p>	<p>A new O&M policy is co-developed with First Nations</p>	<p>FY 2022-23</p>	<p>4.1 ISC has allocated \$140 million in one-time O&M top-ups to First Nations for fiscal year 2020-21 (2020 Fall Economic Statement increase to O&M funding) to bring funding levels up to (or beyond) 100% of formula funding. To allocate funding in future years, beginning in 2021-22, ISC will develop a new O&M funding methodology to better reflect actual O&M costs and support the ability to implement a new O&M policy (refer to item 3.2) (<u>Expected Completion: July 2021</u>)</p> <p>4.2 ISC will continue to work with First Nations to advance O&M policy reform as part of broader work towards an asset management approach (refer to item 3.6) (<u>Expected Completion: April 2023</u>)</p>	
5	<p>3.90: Indigenous Services Canada, in consultation with First Nations, should develop and implement a regulatory regime for safe drinking water in First Nations communities.</p>	<p>Indigenous Services Canada will continue to support the Assembly of First Nations in its lead role in the engagement process. The department will continue to work collaboratively and in full partnership with the Assembly of First Nations, other First Nations and First Nations organizations, and other federal departments to develop a legislative framework that can be presented to Cabinet. Once new legislation is passed, regulations can be developed.</p>	<p>A legislative framework is developed and best efforts will be made to introduce a new legislation that will support safe drinking water in First Nations communities, and that will be supported by First Nations</p>	<p>FY 2022-23</p>	<p>5.1 ISC will continue to support the AFN–led engagement process for the review of the 2013 Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act. The current round of AFN-led engagements with First Nations were completed at the end of March 2021, with further support to be provided in 2021-22 as the AFN-led engagement process continues (refer to item 2.5) (<u>Expected Completion: March 2022</u>)</p> <p>5.2 ISC will co-develop a legislative framework through a Joint Working Group. Approval of legislation is required, to enable development of a regulatory framework (refer to item 2.6) (<u>Expected Completion: December 2022</u>)</p>	