

November 7, 2025

The Right Honourable Mark Carney
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A2

Re: Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act Reintroduction

Dear Prime Minister Carney,

The Canadian Environmental Law Association writes today to urge your government to reintroduce the Safe Drinking Water for First Nations Act.

Prior to the last election, Bill 61 had been considered by Committee and reported back to Parliament. We urge you to work with your Ministers to expedite and proceed with the reintroduction of that Bill in essentially the same format as reported back by Committee in the last Parliament.

While progress has been made over many years, there are still too many First Nations whose treated drinking water is not adequately or consistently safe and whose systems are the subject of ongoing and even long-term boil water advisories.

This situation is untenable, unacceptable, inequitable, and a breach of the human right to safe drinking water that is held by the members of those communities.

Bill 61, as it had been framed in the last Parliament, set out a good framework for First Nations, with flexibility, sovereignty, accountability, and enforceability. Not every First Nation is in the same context and the Bill provided for different administrative approaches to be taken by First Nations across Canada. It also appropriately set out the responsibilities of the federal government. Very importantly, it also provided mechanisms for cooperation across multiple jurisdictions and protection of source waters, the first essential step in a “multi-barrier” approach to protection of drinking water.

Canadians are consistently dismayed by the ongoing inequity presented by the continuation of the drinking water conditions in many First Nations home communities. Furthermore, the Auditor General of Canada reported last month in a follow up audit to earlier reports, that 35 long term boil water advisories in First Nations remain in effect, nine of which have lasted for more than a decade. Her report outlined four main barriers that she views as systemically standing in the way for this and other issues related to First Nations rights and services, including

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sustained management attention by the relevant departments, support for First Nations capacity, soloed approaches, and clarity around service levels.

These are absolutely issues that can be addressed. We urge your government to do so in conjunction with and working with Canada's First Nations. These issues are particularly urgent for the protection of drinking water. Introducing and seeking passage of a First Nations Safe Drinking Water Act is a matter of the highest priority in Canada's current Parliament.

Urgent action is required and is supported by our collective commitment as Canadians to the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, with the accompanying Canadian legislation that embeds an action plan in Canadian law, and Canada's commitments to international human rights framework.

We look forward to your response.

Yours very truly
CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW ASSOCIATION

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. McClenaghan', written over a faint, illegible printed name.

Theresa McClenaghan
Executive Director

cc. Minister of Indigenous Services Canada
Hon. Mandy Gull-Masty