

The Presbyterian Church in Canada L'Église presbytérienne au Canada



MODERATOR OF THE 2017 GENERAL ASSEMBLY
The Rev. Peter Bush

August 3, 2017

The Hon. Carolyn Bennett, M.D., P.C., M.P.
Minister, Indigenous and Northern Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Minister,

I bring you greetings on behalf of the 2017 General Assembly of The Presbyterian Church in Canada which met in Kingston, Ontario, June 4-7, 2017.

I write on behalf of the Assembly to inquire about the Government of Canada's progress in providing clean and potable water in Indigenous communities that remain under boil water advisories. On Oct. 5, 2015, soon-to-be Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stated, "We have 93 different communities under 133 different boil water advisories across the country. [Serpent River First Nation] Chief Isadore Day has called for within five years there should be zero, and I've told the Chief and I've told First Nations many times, we agree with that, and a Canadian government led by me will address this as a top priority because it's not right in a country like Canada that this has gone on for far too long." This is a promise The Presbyterian Church in Canada affirms.

The decision by the Government of Canada in 2016 to end long term Drinking Water Advisories (DWAs) on public systems on reserves within five years was welcome news. The Health Canada website reports "As of June 30, 2017, in 87 First Nations communities south of the 60th parallel there were: 33 short-term DWAs, meaning there was a temporary water quality issue on a specific water system and 99 long-term DWAs, meaning the advisory has been in place for more than a year. Note that DWAs in British Columbia First Nations and communities within the Saskatoon Tribal Council are not included in the above numbers." The task before the Government of Canada is significant if it is to reach its goal of ending long-term DWAs on reserves in five years. The Presbyterian Church in Canada applauds the Government's efforts to achieve this goal.

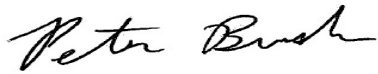
Young adults attending our 2017 General Assembly as active observers made the following statement: "...the drinking water crisis that disproportionately affects our First Nations brothers and sisters is one that the Young Adult Representatives feel passionately about. Today in Canada 87 First Nations communities are under the minimum of a boil water advisory. This injustice is one we don't feel should be overlooked and we are pleased with the General Assembly's vote encouraging the Government of Canada to take action."

Clerks of Assembly: The Rev. Stephen Kendall and The Rev. Donald Muir

And so we ask, as we approach two years since Prime Minister Trudeau's promise, and a year since the Government of Canada's commitment, for a report on the progress being made to end long term DWAs on First Nation communities.

I look forward to hearing from you. Please be assured of our continuing prayers for you and the Government of Canada.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peter Bush".

The Rev. Peter Bush, Moderator
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The Presbyterian Church in Canada