



REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY  
OF WOOD BUFFALO

# COMMUNITY NOTICE

## Municipality's commitment to safe drinking water

### March 29, 2023-Fort Chipewyan Water Treatment Plant Community Update

#### **What measures are being taken to ensure the safety of drinking water in Fort Chipewyan?**

To ensure the safety of drinking water in Fort Chipewyan, the Municipality has implemented an enhanced monitoring and operation program with input from drinking water specialists at Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (AEPA). This program monitors naphthenic acids, hydrocarbons, and metals. It also tests raw water diverted from Lake Athabasca when the storage ponds are filled, and the drinking water produced by the Fort Chipewyan water treatment plant. Our goal is to ensure that the drinking water in Fort Chipewyan remains safe, and we will continue to take all necessary steps to ensure this.

#### **Why can I smell chlorine in the tap water?**

Chlorine is added to water to kill harmful viruses, bacteria, and microbes, and to prevent the spread of diseases like dysentery, typhoid, and cholera. Tap water may smell like chlorine because it is treated with it, and the strength of the smell depends on the concentration of chlorine and a person's sensitivity to it.

#### **What emergency plans are in place for Fort Chipewyan if clean drinking water is unavailable?**

Fort Chipewyan's water treatment plant produces safe drinking water, but if it becomes unable to do so, protocols are in place to inform the community, community leaders, and regulatory agencies like Alberta Health Services, Indigenous Services Canada, and Alberta Environment and Protected Areas.

Fort Chipewyan has a strong and specific Community Emergency Management Plan, which has been recently reviewed and tested during last summer's wildfire situation.

If needed, the Community Emergency Management Plan will be activated by emergency management partners, and the Municipality would collaborate closely with community leadership. The Fort Chipewyan Community Emergency Management Plan can be read in Cree, Dene, or English at [www.rmwb.ca/cemp](http://www.rmwb.ca/cemp)





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# COMMUNITY NOTICE

The RMWB is working with a contractor to help develop a Continuity of Water Supply (COWS) plan for Fort Chipewyan. We understand how much water is required for people each day, factoring in drinking, food preparation, hygiene, and household needs. This information would determine how much water would need to be available via an alternative source. If necessary, water could be transported up the winter road when it's in or flown / barged in during the summer months. These measures are not needed currently, but they are part of the Community's Emergency Management Plan.

## Extensive Testing and Monitoring

### Where can I find information on water quality today?

Information on local water quality and testing results, including the summary report of Fort Chipewyan water treatment plant operations from January 1, 2022 – March 9, 2023, can be found at [www.rmwb.ca/water](http://www.rmwb.ca/water)

**The Alberta Water Quality Data Portal** provides access to water quality data collected by the Government of Alberta and its partners. The portal provides water quality data for various water bodies across the province, including rivers, lakes, and groundwater sources. The data includes information on physical, chemical, and biological parameters, as well as information on water quality trends over time. For more information: [www.alberta.ca/water-reports-data.aspx](http://www.alberta.ca/water-reports-data.aspx)

**The Oil Sands Monitoring portal** is an online platform managed by Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Alberta Energy Regulator. It provides data on air, water, land, and biodiversity monitoring, as well as environmental effects monitoring and cumulative effects assessment related to oil sand development in Alberta. The portal is a joint initiative between the federal and provincial governments and is used to assess the environmental impacts of oil sands development. For more information: [www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/oil-sands-monitoring.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/oil-sands-monitoring.html)

### How is local wildlife tested for contamination?

Testing of wildlife is not something that the Municipality has the authority to do. In Alberta, wildlife testing for contamination is typically done by Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (AEPA). AEPA is responsible for monitoring and assessing the health of wildlife populations in the province, including investigating the effects of pollution and contamination on animals. AEPA works in partnership with





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# COMMUNITY NOTICE

other organizations, such as the Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative, to conduct research and surveillance programs aimed at protecting and conserving Alberta's wildlife.

## **Does the Municipality regularly test for metals, lead, and benzidine?**

We test for these materials regularly – twice a year as part of our approval required to operate the water treatment plant.

## **How will the Municipality ensure the long-term safety of drinking water in Fort Chipewyan?**

Water treatment plants throughout the region have rigorous processes in place to ensure the safety of the water supply, which align with Canadian Drinking Water Quality Guidelines. Regular testing and monitoring confirm our compliance in maintaining the high quality of the water supply. The Municipality is committed to upholding the highest standards of water safety to ensure the long-term safety of the supply in Fort Chipewyan.

## **How is the Municipality going to continue to advocate for quality drinking water for Fort Chipewyan?**

The Municipality will continue to support initiatives to reduce or remove the risk of contamination. One potential solution is relocating the intake further north into the lake. The Municipality will also have a third-party consultant review the distribution system to address any issues with its shallow nature. We are currently advocating to all levels of government on quality drinking water through the Fort Chipewyan Community Working Group committee.

## **Relocation of the water intake**

### **Will the Municipality consider moving the water intake in Lake Athabasca?**

The Municipality is committed to working with all levels of government to advocate for relocation of the intake and is actively investigating alternate sources. This will require completion of additional third-party studies. A prominent option that will be assessed is relocating the intake further north on Lake Athabasca to lessen the potential impacts from the Athabasca River and Peace River during spring melt.

### **How would the community receive a backup water source if needed?**

If the Fort Chipewyan Water Treatment plant were unable to produce safe drinking water, water could be transported by air or barge during the summer or by truck during the winter road season. The Municipality is currently exploring other potential water sources, including the option to relocate the





# COMMUNITY NOTICE

intake further north into Lake Athabasca to lessen the potential impacts from both the Athabasca River and the Peace River during spring melt.

## The Municipality's commitment to keeping you informed and updated

Providing safe drinking water is our top priority. Transparency and timely communication are also essential.

We are committed to providing the community with data and testing results, and we will notify residents, community leadership, and regulatory agencies immediately if there is ever a situation resulting in unsafe drinking water at the treatment plant. We understand the importance of open communication and transparency, and we are committed to keeping the community informed of any updates as they become available.

We encourage residents to visit [www.rmwb.ca/water](http://www.rmwb.ca/water) for the latest news and updates on Fort Chipewyan's water quality or visit the Municipal office.

## Timeline of events until now

