

## **Media Backgrounder**

### **Regulatory Improvements**

The lead regulator for water is Saskatchewan Environment. A key element of its improvements is a Drinking Water Quality Unit. Other departments responsible for components of the overall water program will continue to provide their valuable skills and perspectives to ensure an efficient and effective program.

### **Operator Certification**

In 2000, a regulation was passed, where at least one person in charge of the water treatment plant is required to be certified by July 2005. New regulations will also require operators to take additional training as a condition of maintaining their certification after 2005. Operators who receive their certificate through work experience will also be required to attend workshops and training courses. It will result in:

- Improved ability of operators to anticipate problems in advance
- Improved ability of operators to react to problems that might occur

In the past 20 months more than 300 operators have been certified and it is anticipated that 750 will be certified by 2005. Currently 65 per cent to 75 per cent of the population is served by water systems employing certified operators. The cost of the program is the responsibility of the communities and will vary depending on the location and type of training required.

### **Clearer Roles**

#### **Regulatory changes will define specific roles and responsibilities:**

Saskatchewan Environment will:

- regulate all construction of waterworks and wastewater systems
- regulate all municipal waterworks with 15 or more service connections (formerly based on 4,000 gals/day flow rate)
- regulate rural pipelines
- conduct additional compliance inspections of all municipal water and sewage works under its jurisdiction; one to two inspections per year for waterworks and one inspection per year of sewage works
- Introduce regulatory amendments to enable legal enforcement of certain standards for bacteriological parameters and turbidity for drinking water
- An emergency response protocol will create templates to help owners of regulated waterworks to deal with incidents of significant scale or impact

Saskatchewan Health/Health Districts will:

- bring into force the new Health Hazard Regulations. These regulations, which include more drinking water safety requirements for semi-public systems such as restaurants, campgrounds and non-municipal systems with less than 15 service connections, will replace the current Sanitation Regulations, under The Public Health Act, 1994. Specifically, the regulations will:
  - allow health districts to set minimum water sampling requirements;
  - allow health districts to set minimum treatment; and

- require immediate reporting of positive bacteriological tests to the owner and the health district.
- apply the bacteriological parameters of the Canadian Drinking Water Guidelines to all semi-public water systems.

Owners of water works (primarily municipalities) will be required to:

- Have their water works independently assessed every five years. This initiative will be phased in for small communities with 500 or fewer residents.
- Report any process upset or disinfectant levels

### **Systems and Transparency**

The province is mandating reporting of water quality, sample submission compliance and waterworks financial plans by owners of waterworks to the customers they serve.

### **Other Initiatives**

#### **Information Sharing**

The province will establish a water information system that allows Saskatchewan Environment, municipalities, Saskatchewan Health and health districts to share information, and more quickly respond to risks to water supplies. The centralized data system will also be linked to a web page so information about sampling, water quality and compliance will be accessible to waterworks operators and the public.

A public education campaign will be launched to promote the value of water.