

# THE NATIONAL WATER PICTURE

The information provides a snapshot of the state of water across Canada. Not all Provinces measure their water woes in the same way. The problems run from large treated municipal systems to untreated private systems in small communities.

## Yukon

Last November more than 20 elementary school children in Watson Lake became ill after drinking water infected with the E.coli bacteria. A boil-water advisory was then issued.

Yukon's chief medical officer also issued a boil-water advisory for the town of Tagish after high levels of coliform were found in the water system.

## British Columbia

Currently 220 boil-water advisories are in effect in BC

Many of the provinces 3,500 water systems have no disinfecting capabilities.

Despite this, there have been no reported waterborne disease outbreaks since 1998.

However, there have been 28 water related disease outbreaks in the 20 years prior to 1998.

The most serious occurred in 1996, when 10,000 people in Kelowna became ill after they were infected with cryptosporidium from drinking water.

## Alberta

There were 13 boil-water advisories in Alberta in 2000. There was one advisory in Calgary and four covering a region that include Banff, Canmore and High River.

Most of the advisories were related to the effects of spring-runoff, which causes the bacterial count in water to jump significantly.

## Saskatchewan

Hundreds of people are now ill in North Battleford and three people are dead as officials investigate how a parasite entered the water pipes.

A Native reserve in northern Saskatchewan has been on a boil-water order for four years because its reservoir is filled with runoff from farm fields. Residents in the southern town of Central Butte had to boil their water after a sample of from their hospital tested positive for the E.coli bacteria. The hospital

water system had to be flushed and chlorine levels were raised in the town's water supply. According to Senator Jerry Grafstein, 28 drinking water systems in Saskatchewan received boil-water advisories last year.

## Manitoba

During the summer of 2000 several rural communities were issued boil water advisories. In Balmoral a community of about 200 people, 86 percent of the towns 75 wells were found to contain coliform or E.coli bacteria.

The boil water advisories were issued after particularly heavy rains last June and July.

But the Deteriorating State of some rural water systems was cited as a contributing factor as well.

CRYPTOSPORIDIUM was also found, for the first time, at the inlet of the Deacon Reservoir. The Winnipeg aqueduct was closed as investigators tried to find the source of the potentially deadly parasite.

## **Ontario**

Documents show that between Walkerton disaster and this February, more than 70 municipal systems were given water advisories- including a boil order in the premier's hometown of North Bay. This number does not include private systems including those of trailer parks, schools, and resorts that would multiply the number of water problems several times over.

In a review completed in December, the Ontario government found that more than half of the province's 645 municipal treatment plants failed to meet standards.

Most of the problems were with sampling and inadequate disinfecting.

## **Quebec**

In Quebec, municipalities issued 542 water pollution advisories in 2000.

Two more such advisories were issued by the provincial gov't.

Last year, chemical solvents were found in Shannon, a municipality near Quebec City.

The environment minister granted \$150,000 to pay for the purification equipment to clean up the chemicals that contaminated the drinking water. Cont.

The gov't also told 90 municipalities to clean up their drinking water systems that were dubbed inadequate,

causing an estimated 30,000 people to boil water for several weeks. Affected places included areas in Quebec City and Montreal.

## **Newfoundland**

There are currently 260 boil advisories in effect in

Newfoundland- but high number includes a number of precautionary measures in very small communities, many of which are awaiting chlorinating systems. Safety inspectors blitzed the province after Walkerton last year. One of these advisories was issued because of the presence of giardia.

## **Nova Scotia**

Late last year the town of Spring Hill was placed on a boil water advisory. The source of the contamination was unknown.

A concern about the safety of the town's water supply was one of the main issues of the municipal election.

The new mayor promised to make the water supply his top priority.

The village of Tatamagouche was also placed on a boil water advisory last year after coliform was found in the water system.

## **New Brunswick**

Two municipalities- Broutche and Clair- in New Brunswick currently have boil orders in effect to prevent the spread of coliform bacteria. "We don't want to see what happened in Walkerton happen here." The Bouctouche mayor said recently. Communities ordered to boil water because of bacteria in the last year include Moncton, St. Stephen, Temperance Vale, Grand Falls, Sackville and Fredericton Junction.

## **Prince Edward Island**

Prince Edward Island issued boiling water advisories for Charlottetown and two other communities in the last year and documents four cases of the parasite cryptosporidium in the last two years and documents four cases of the parasite cryptosporidium in the last two years- none fatal. In an average year about 3.4 percent of well tests positive for E.coli.

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