

N.S. water ranks second highest for quality, safety

November 15, 2011 - 9:12pm By FRANCES WILLICK Staff Reporter



Wendell Coveyduc, who works at the Lake Major Water Supply Plant, tests a sample for hardness on Tuesday. A report on drinking water management gave Nova Scotia high marks. (CHRISTIAN LAFORCE / Staff)

A new report on drinking water management practices across Canada has ranked Nova Scotia second-best in the country.

The province received an A– on the report card, released Tuesday by Ecojustice, a national charitable organization devoted to protecting Canada's environment.

Nova Scotia was second only to Ontario, which received an A. Other provinces and territories received grades as low as D, while the federal government was the lone jurisdiction to receive a failing grade.

The report, called Waterproof 3, is the third the group has issued since poorly monitored drinking water in Walkerton, Ont., caused an outbreak of waterborne illness in 2000 that killed seven and left about 2,500 residents ill.

While many provinces saw improvements in their grades since the previous report, released in 2006, most areas saw their grades slip or remain static.

Randy Christensen, the study's author, said that's a troubling trend.

"There is a danger that the lessons of Walkerton are being forgotten," he said in a national teleconference with reporters Tuesday.

"Between 2001 and 2006, we saw rapid and dramatic improvements. In the period between 2006 and 2011, that progress has slowed to what I would call an incremental and moderate pace. To see a slowing in momentum is very concerning."

The tragedy in Walkerton prompted one of the most extensive inquiries in Canadian history. Of the

Latest Videos



Militar

Ads by Good

[Water](#)

[Drinking W](#)

[Water Wat](#)

recommendations to come out of the Walkerton inquiry, the first and strongest was that Ontario implement plans to protect all watersheds.

Nova Scotia, which saw an improvement from its B ranking in 2006, was praised in the report for its ongoing protection of water sources and its strong testing and treatment standards. About 75 per cent of Nova Scotia's municipal drinking water sources have protection plans in place. Comparatively, Alberta, which received a C-, has no specific water source protection plans, the report said.

Judy MacDonald, supervisor of the drinking water management program for Nova Scotia's Environment Department, said the province's positive results in the Ecojustice survey were a long time in the making.

"We've had 10 years working on this," she said. "It's showing. The report is showing the results of 10 years of commitment to the program."

Jocelyne Rankin, water co-ordinator for the Ecology Action Centre in Halifax, also lauded the Environment Department's hard work.

"Really, the province didn't wait for a tragedy to occur here," Rankin said. "They really took a proactive approach."

But Rankin and co-worker Jennifer West, the centre's groundwater co-ordinator, said there are still steps Nova Scotia can take to work toward an A+ in the next Ecojustice survey.

They emphasized the need for more monitoring of groundwater resources, better management of storm water, increased implementation of farm management plans to protect waterways from run-off, and more checks on development to prevent damage from mining, oil and gas and other developments.

The federal government's grade of F was due in large part to the poor quality of drinking water in First Nations communities, budget cuts to environmental departments responsible for collecting data about water resources, and efforts to increase privatization of public water services.

fwillick@herald.ca

WATER RANKINGS

Province: 2006 grade / 2011 grade

- Yukon: C- / D+
- Northwest Territories: C+ / C
- Nunavut: C / D
- British Columbia: C+ / C+
- Alberta: B / C-
- Saskatchewan: B- / B-
- Manitoba: C+ / B+
- Ontario: A- / A
- Quebec: B+ / B-
- New Brunswick: C- / B+
- Nova Scotia: B / A-
- P.E.I: C- / B-
- Newfoundland/Labrador: D / B
- Federal government: F / F

About the Author »

By FRANCES WILLICK Staff Reporter