



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

19 February 2025

Weso'tmk Samqwan Incorporated signs agreement with Government of Canada to establish Mi'kmaw-led water services in New Brunswick

Metepenagiag Mi'kmaq Nation, New Brunswick – Weso'tmk Samqwan Incorporated, an Indigenous organization focused on providing safe, reliable, and sustainable water and wastewater services, has signed a framework agreement with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). The agreement sets the stage to transfer the support services for water and wastewater systems from the Government of Canada to Weso'tmk Samqwan Incorporated, marking an important step toward self-determination for First Nations in New Brunswick.

Framework Agreement Overview

The Weso'tmk Samqwan Incorporated Framework Agreement was signed on Wednesday, February 19, by Chief Bill Ward of Metepenagiag and Chief George Ginnish of Natoaganeg, Directors of Weso'tmk Samqwan Incorporated, and Tammy Drew-Howse, Associate Regional Director General, ISC Atlantic Region. The agreement serves as a roadmap for transferring water and wastewater management services from the Government of Canada to Weso'tmk Samqwan Incorporated, clearly defining roles and responsibilities. It addresses key gaps in service standards, capacity building, regulations and funding, advancing the goal of self-sufficiency for Mi'kmaw First Nations.

Empowering Mi'kmaq Communities

This initiative is part of a broader effort to empower Mi'kmaw First Nations to manage essential services that are critical to their well-being. The agreement aligns with the Government of Canada's responsibilities under the 2021 Safe Drinking Water Class Action Settlement Agreement. It reinforces Canada's commitment to help ensure safe drinking water on-reserve through measures that strengthen infrastructure and support First Nation water laws and governance.

North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council (NSMTC)

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Next Steps

The next step is the co-development of a service delivery transfer agreement between Weso'tmk Samqwan Incorporated and ISC that will include long-term funding for the organization to fully deliver water and wastewater services. With the framework agreement in place, Weso'tmk Samqwan Incorporated will now focus on implementing the transfer process and building organizational capacity, with support from the North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council and ISC.

Quotes

"When Indigenous communities take the lead in managing essential services, we create a stronger, more sustainable future for our people, ultimately by our people. This agreement is about reclaiming responsibility for the water systems that sustain us, ensuring they are managed with the highest standards and with Mi'kmaq values at the core."

–Chief George Ginnish, Director, Weso'tmk Samqwan Incorporated; Chief, Natoaganaeg; Chair, North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council

"This agreement is a testament to what we can achieve when Indigenous leadership and government partners come together with a shared vision. By reclaiming responsibility for water and wastewater services, we are taking steps toward self-determination and ensuring that our communities have the infrastructure, expertise, and resources they need to thrive. Water is life, and it is vital that our Mi'kmaq communities have systems in place that reflect our values and priorities."

–Jim Ward, General Manager, North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council

"The signing of the Framework Agreement with Weso'tmk Samqwan Incorporated is a critical step toward implementing this First Nation-led service delivery model. Projects that help communities restore control of the programs and wastewater firmly in the hands of Indigenous Peoples is key to services they rely on are important to strengthening self-determination and building a future where everyone has a fair chance to succeed."

–The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for FedNor, Government of Canada

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About Weso'tmk Samqwan Incorporated

Weso'tmk Samqwan Incorporated is a Mi'kmaw-led, not-for-profit organization committed to providing water and wastewater services related to technical support, capacity-building, and financial planning for participating First Nations across New Brunswick. Incorporated in 2023, Weso'tmk Samqwan Incorporated was developed with strategic direction from the North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council (NSMTC), representing seven Mi'kmaq Nations in New Brunswick. Since 2020, with support from Indigenous Services Canada, the NSMTC has consulted with member First Nations, their Chiefs, and technical experts to ensure that Weso'tmk Samqwan Incorporated's service model aligns with providing safe, clean, and reliable drinking water and effective treatment of wastewater to First Nation communities.

About the North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council

The North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council is a not-for-profit organization that primarily serves its seven Member Nations – Ugpi'ganjig, Oinpegitjoig, Natoaganeg, Metepenagiag, L'nui Menikuk, Tjipōgtōtjg, and Amlamgog First Nations – while extending support to 25 additional First Nations across Atlantic Canada. The council provides service delivery, technical support, and capacity-building in water and waste management, housing and infrastructure, post-secondary education funding, training and employment, community development, clean energy opportunities, environmental stewardship, and health service coordination. The NSMTC's mission is to foster the health, sustainability, and economic prosperity of its Member Nations.

Media Inquiries

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Photos



Left to Right: Gabrielle Robert (Indigenous Services Canada), Chief George Ginnish (Natoaganeg First Nation), Chief Bill Ward (Metepenagiag Mi'kmaq Nation), Tammy Drew-Howse (Indigenous Services Canada), Elder Tully Paul (Metepenagiag Mi'kmaq Nation), Elder Gordon LaBillois (North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council), Maggie Stothart (Weso'tmk Samqwan Incorporated)



Chief George Ginnish (Natoaganeg First Nation), Tammy Drew-Howse (Indigenous Services Canada), Chief Bill Ward (Metepenagiag Mi'kmaq Nation) sign framework agreement

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