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United States Senate

January 5, 2017

COMMITTEES
APPROPRIATIONS
COMMERCE, SCIENCE AND
TRANSPORTATION
ENERGY AND NATURAL
RESOURCES
INDIAN AFFAIRS

Ms. Mary L. Smith
Principal Deputy Director
Indian Health Service
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Dear Ms. Smith:

I write to implore your swift and immediate action in response to the Chippewa Cree Tribe's urgent request regarding the tribe's water service. As detailed in their proposal to you, the tribe is in need of emergency funding under P.L. 86-121 for technical and financial assistance for sourcewater supply repairs, transmission main repairs, purchase and delivery of alternative water, and administration of the Emergency Administrative Order issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on December 23, 2016.

By way of brief background, on December 21, 2016, the Tribal Water Resources Department-Public Works (TWRD-PW) became aware of low water pressures and depleting water storage tank levels throughout the Newtown Water system, which is located on the reservation. Through consultation with the Chippewa Cree Housing Authority and TWRD-PW inspection of the distribution system, the tribe discovered that several residential homes suffered 1) waterline breaks due to extremely low temperatures, 2) loss of heating and electrical service, and 3) a subsequent warming pattern in the air temperatures. As a result, hundreds of thousands of gallons of water was wasted, depleting water storage in three of the reservation's primary storage facilities. By the afternoon of December 22, the Newtown, Bonneau, and 3 Mile Tanks were drained and approximately 115 residential homes, the Rocky Boy Head Start facilities, Stone Child College, and the Chippewa Cree Tribal Justice Center were without water pressure and water service. From December 22 through December 27, 2016 the system experienced six more water pipe breaks in the crawl spaces of residential homes and two water main breaks.

As further detailed in the tribe's request, a failure to act will cause the persistence of "significant sanitary deficiencies . . . Such a system failure carries with it a high potential that fecal contamination or other disease-causing organisms could enter the distribution system. These conditions may pose an imminent and substantial health endangerment to persons served by the system." This matter is of utmost importance and must be addressed immediately.

I urge you to promptly help the Chippewa Cree Tribe remedy this crisis. I also request your response with your intended course of action by Monday, January 9.

Sincerely,



STEVE DAINES

United States Senator