

Private Well Water: Building a Community of Practice

Jeff Eyamie

Health Canada

Environmental Health Program MB/SK



The Beginning

Health Canada's role in drinking water:

Assess contaminants

Develop guidance for P/T use

**Co-ordinate F/P/T Committee on Drinking Water
(CDW)**

[Water and Air Quality Bureau – Water Division]



The Beginning



The Health Canada Opportunity:

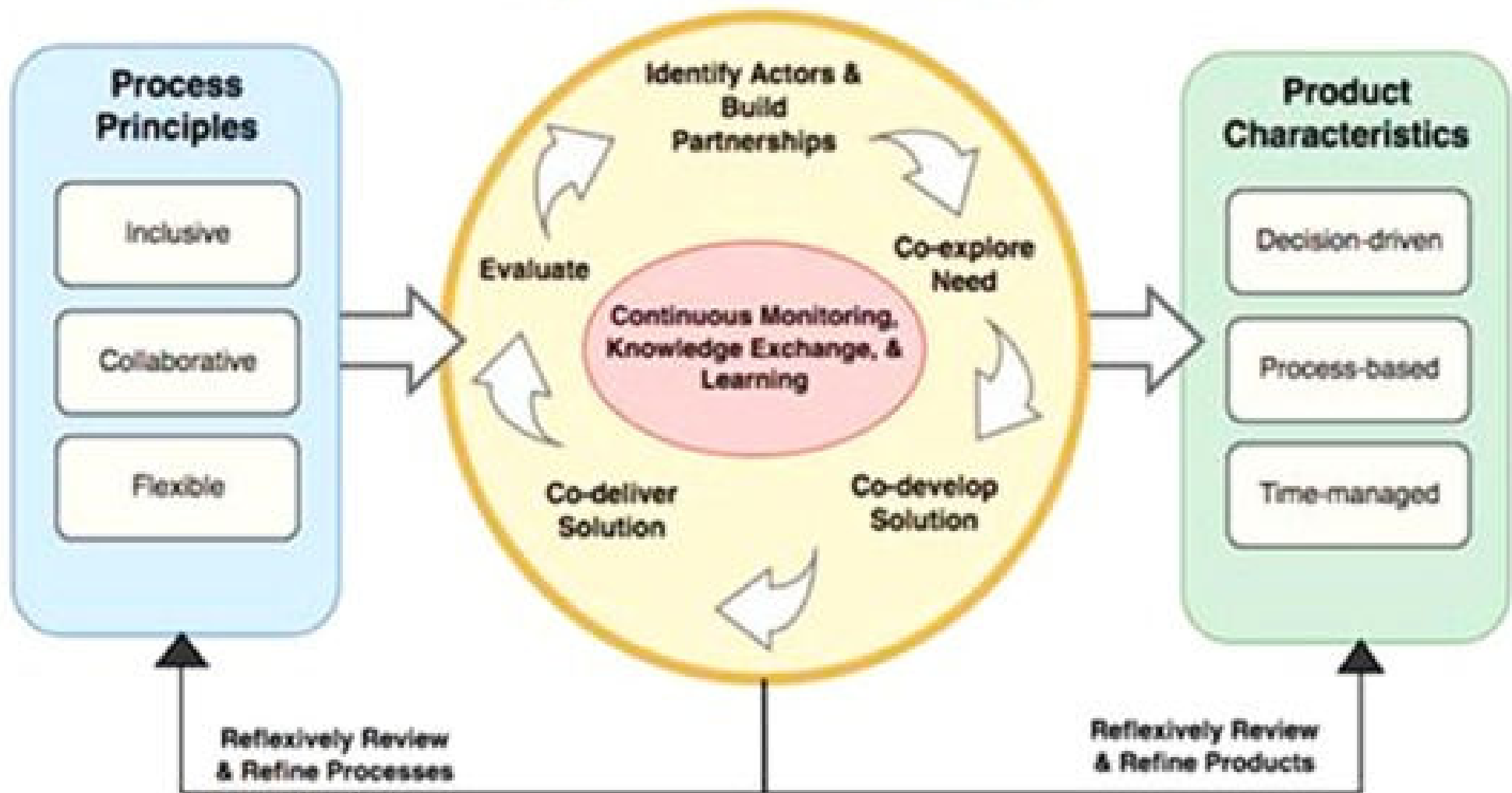
Collaborate on improvements to the safety of drinking water from private wells

Go beyond outreach (“Well Aware”) products to offer strategic engagements/community-building

Listen, learn, seek new opportunities, using a Co-Production Model

Co-production cycle

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cliser.2018.11.001>



“What do PTs need from Health Canada re: Private Wells?”

CDW: “help us address low levels of well testing across Canada”

2023 PT Survey/Environment Scan:

- **~14% of Canadians drink private well water (5.7 million people)**
- **testing incentives vary widely**
- **no shared definition of Private Well**

Results of the Jurisdictional Survey on Private Well Water Testing in Canada

Stephanie McFadyen
Manager, Water Quality Division
Water and Air Quality Bureau
Health Canada
January 17th, 2023



Private Well Water Workshop 1: January, 2023

100 Participants

Presenters from across Canada, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Ireland

Engagement with academia and NGOs begins

Video available of proceedings, along with workshop report/overview of presentations

A federal testing program similar to Radon Program was expressed as desirable

Barriers to testing: awareness, test availability, understanding the problem

Private Well Water Testing Workshop
Sponsored by the Federal-Provincial-Territorial
Committee on Drinking Water
Hosted by Health Canada (HECSB / ROEB)
January 17-19, 2023

Workshop Report

Private Well Water Workshop 1: January, 2023



Next steps

Items identified as potential “quick wins” include:

1. Create a standing working group to continue discussion and establish priorities
2. Explore feasibility of national certification program for treatment professionals
3. Create online warehouse of relevant research materials

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Workshop Report

Private Well Water Steering Committee

First meeting: December 2023

CDW Members Only

**Oversight of General Direction of Activities
(shared governance in Co-Production Model)**

Ad Hoc “Working Groups” that feed into this group

Health Canada: “secretariat function”

Terms of Reference

Private Well Water Steering Committee

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Private Well Water Steering Committee

Background

In Canada, drinking water quality is primarily a provincial and territorial responsibility. Most P/Ts have in place regulations to ensure the quality of public and semi-public drinking water supplies, taking into consideration Canadian Guidelines for Drinking Water Quality, as well as testing frequencies. In the case of private wells, their construction is generally (but not always) regulated across the country, but the testing of their water quality is not. It was suggested during a National Workshop on Private Well Water Testing held January, 2023, to establish a National Working group to help support provinces and territories in their role to better protect the health of Canadians and manage the infrastructure related to private well use. It is estimated that six million Canadians use private wells, representing a significant public health impact that deserves further attention and awareness.

Definitions

Private well: There is no common definition of a private well in Canada. Every Canadian jurisdiction has its own distinct regulatory definition of "private well", focusing either on supply purpose (e.g., not public, privately owned, for domestic purposes) or on the number of connections, dwelling or people. Although the definitions vary, the challenges are similar.

Jurisdiction: Refers to the extent or range of judicial, law-enforcement, or other authority. In the context of drinking water regulation in Canada, responsible authorities are primarily provinces and territories, and the federal government in some instances.

Mandate

The primary purpose of the PWW Steering Committee is to provide a forum to facilitate National discussions related to best practices, tools and outreach strategies to support private well owners.

February 2024

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V 1.0

Private Well Water WORKING GROUPS

Informal, exploratory format

Brief, regular meetings with no agenda

Organic discussion encouraged

CDW and non-CDW invitees

**LET THE MEMBERS DRIVE THE BUS
(Co-Production Model)**

February, 2023:

- 1) Workshop Organizing**
- 2) Professional Certification**
- 3) Data**
- 4) Public Outreach**
- 5) Climate Change**
- 6) Health Impacts**

Working Group Outcomes

- **Professional certification:** review and revisions of CWQA curriculum
- **Climate Change:** “characteristics of a resilient well”
 - Identify hazards
 - Share research
 - Work toward tool for well user
- **Health Impacts:**
 - Share research
 - Identify needs
- **Data:**
 - Understand how wells data is managed in Canada
 - Need: shared repository
- **Outreach**
 - Use pilot project to create digital tool
 - Collect outreach materials
 - Are we missing any products that could help?
- **Workshop Organizing**
 - Workshop was organized!

Private Well Water Workshop 2: November 2024

~250 attendees

National collection of online resources/materials:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1StyAADKzX5Qow8UoyXQPtHH7I3ZXLhw9?usp=drive link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1StyAADKzX5Qow8UoyXQPtHH7I3ZXLhw9?usp=drive_link)

Digital tool prototype to help well owners with testing

Review of CWQA curriculum materials

**New engagements: Canada Water Agency,
Hydrogeologists, Watershed Associations and more**

The Second Canadian Private Well Water Workshop

**Presented by the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Committee on
Drinking Water (CDW) and Health Canada
November 26 - 28, 2024**

WORKSHOP REPORT

Private Well Water Workshop 2: November 2024

New Working Group Structure:

- 1) Front-Line Outreach**
- 2) Well Construction/Maintenance/Treatment**
- 3) Hydrogeology**
- 4) Burden of Illness**
- 5) Climate Change Resiliency**
- 6) Data Management**

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WORKSHOP REPORT



Challenges:

- **How to share information? GCCollab**
- **Objectives to become more formal**
- **Non-HC leadership**
- **Building the national business case**
- **Gaining buy-in for the current approach**

Private Well Water Workshop 3: November 2025

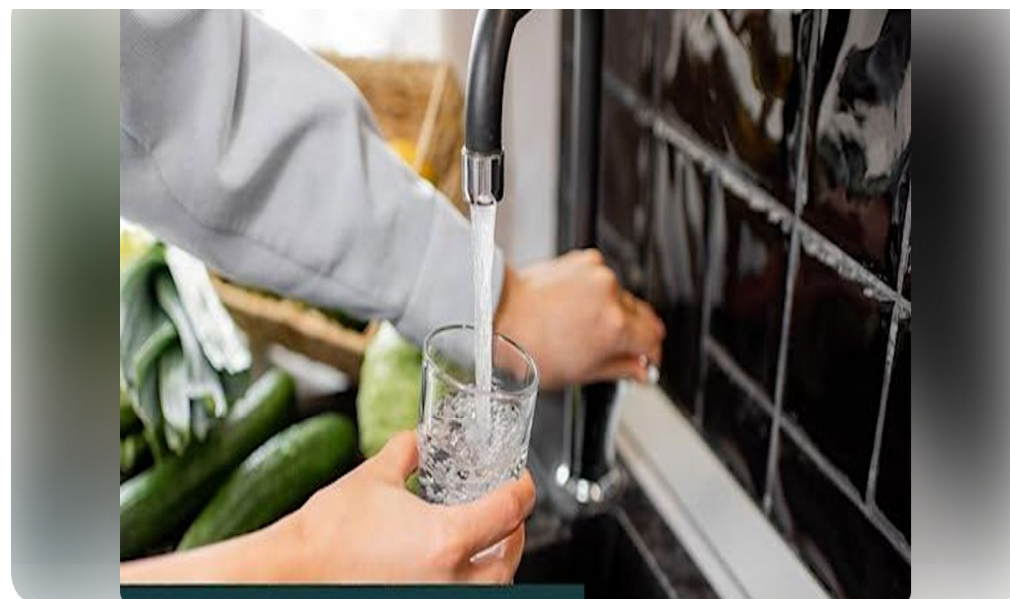
Delivering Results from Our National Collaboration

Nov 24 – 26, 2025

Virtual

Both official languages

<https://waterworkshop3.eventbrite.ca>



Monday, November 24



The Third Canadian Private Well Water Workshop

By Committee on Drinking Water

✓ Following

Free

Nov 24 · 10:00 AM CST

Get tickets

Post-Workshop 3



Plenary of all working group members

Enhanced collaboration

Continue business case development

Adjust to federal spending changes

Participate! Jeff.Eyamie@hc-sc.gc.ca