

Executive Summary

Most Saskatchewan residents take their drinking water for granted, but for many northern communities – including our province's largest – a reliable, safe water source is a major issue. The principal concern for the Town of La Ronge and Northern Village of Air Ronge, along with their neighbour the Lac La Ronge Indian Band, has been power outages which disrupt and jeopardize water and wastewater services. Whenever the power went out, which is frequent in the north, government regulations required shutting down the water supply and issuing a “boil water” advisory.

In 2014, Associated Engineering (Sask) Ltd. was contracted to lead the design and construction of upgrades to keep the tap water flowing despite power outages. The complexity of factors makes this project a case study for utility issues in communities throughout the North.

The project encompassed 21 separate facilities – 18 sewage pump stations, two water pump stations, and a sewage treatment plant – each with its own unique issues and history. It involved two distinct municipal jurisdictions with their sometimes conflicting priorities, as well as SaskWater as their project manager. It demanded complex project coordination and innovative solutions to stay within a strict budget. All of these challenges were overcome in an exemplary process of cooperation and coordination.

All work was completed as promised without a lost-time accident, major dispute, or any regulatory issue. Local trade skills and alliances were strengthened. Most important of all, as of July 2017, when the power goes out, the water stays on.