Addressing First Nations' Concerns in Water Sharing Agreements

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What are the concerns?

1. Capacity
First Nations may not have sufficient financial resources to effectively implement agreements and to maintain the regular payments to the municipality (Landon 2020).

2. Cultural Protection
There is a stark contrast in the ways that First Nations and non-First Nations communities view the role and importance of water (McGregor 2014).

3. Sovereignty
Entering into water sharing agreements can be seen as an impediment to Indigenous nation-building efforts (White, Murphy, and Spence 2012).

What did we find?

- **Capacity**: We found that 49% of agreements included provisions that would assuage capacity concerns, such as ones that allow for bulk billing, future rate negotiations, or funding for initial capital costs.

- **Cultural Protection**: We found that 5% of agreements included provisions that recognize the distinct, special relationship that First Nations have with water.

- **Sovereignty**: We found that 45% of agreements included provisions that would assuage sovereignty concerns, such as ones that recognize Indigenous rights, prevent unilateral water supply cut-off, allow for free usage, or include mechanisms of joint governance.

Discussion and Next Steps

- Most of the questions asked were not found in the agreements, which explains the hesitancy of some First Nations in entering into agreements.
- More analysis of coding results to be done, to find more trends and patterns.
- Important for action to be taken in implementing these changes to new agreements, as the water crisis in First Nations communities remains ongoing.

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References


