

Stanton, Terry A. (Treasury)

From: Wurfel, Brad (DEQ)
Sent: Thursday, January 29, 2015 3:15 PM
To: Stanton, Terry A. (Treasury); Murray, David (GOV); Wurfel, Sara (GOV)
Cc: Silfven, Ken; Brown, Jessica (GOV)
Subject: Flint water piece.

In case you guys missed Chastity Pratt's piece today in Bridge...

<http://bridgemi.com/2015/01/cringe-over-troubled-water-flints-smelly-dilemma/>

I've drafted this response. Would like to send it to her yet today. Would like to make sure it doesn't cause any of us undue heartburn. Please review and call me? Thanks!

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Hi, Chastity. Apologies we did not get to connect as you were preparing your story on Flint water. I understand DEQ staff were able to provide some data.

Overall, well done from a factual perspective. If you decide to revisit the issue, keep me in mind. I'd much like to offer some broader DEQ perspective on our drinking water program and this situation in particular. Some key pieces that folks should know include these:

1. The decision to leave Detroit as a water supplier and use the Flint River was developed and pushed by Flint's local elected officials – over the concerns of state officials. Ultimately, the state signed off on the project (as required because of the EFM) – but consider that Genesee County still gets water from Detroit today, without a contract. This switch wasn't mandated by Detroit, or the state, or anyone but the leadership in Flint, and was proposed as a money saver until the KWA system comes online.
2. The idea that the state owns Flint's water woes outright because of the presence of an EFM ignores that much of this problem is the result of decades of the city failing to perform upkeep on their system. Someone might even argue that the absence of a maintenance fund for infrastructure is just one more symptom of a broader problem that resulted in an EFM assigned to keep the city from financial crash. It's worth noting that the city was approved for a DEQ revolving fund loan in 2009, and DEQ sent a letter congratulating them, only to have the city decline the funding. Seen in that light, the city's proposed solution of state forgiveness on the \$20.7 million it presently owes to the State Revolving Fund and an infusion of new, no-strings money for maintenance and line repairs looks, arguably, different.
3. The heart of the problem isn't just because Flint's leaders decided to use the Flint River as a source. It's true that the river water varies in quality, and requires a flexible

treatment strategy to address seasonal fluctuations, but the water aesthetics concerning residents in Flint are compounded by the fact that the system is old and has not been kept up. Flint's water system consists of more than 500 miles of pipes, and more than half of those pipe miles are more than 75 years old. Much of it is cast iron (hence the color issues). The hardness of the water from the river certainly appears to be exacerbating the (rusting) discoloration. It's why GM pulled off Flint's water.

4. The Safe Drinking Water Act, and Michigan's drinking water program, regularly and rigorously reviews municipal water supplies for more than 90 different toxins, including microbial ones. The objective is comprehensive screening that keeps water quality up and mandatory reporting to help customers make informed health decisions when there's an issue, whether that's an immediate health threat (like e. coli or total coliform) or a long-term potential threat like TTHM. But it is the Safe Drinking Water Act, not the Clear Drinking Water Act. The program does not regulate water for aesthetics like color or smell.
5. We empathize with Flint residents who are unhappy with their water. They pay a lot for it, and in some cases it is not the clear, tasteless product one might anticipate. But our goal at DEQ is to make sure the system operators are testing the water according to state and federal law, and that it meets safety standards. Recent testing indicates that the TTHM levels are dropping rapidly, and we will continue to work with the city to protect water customers in the days, months and years ahead.

Thanks,
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