

# Taking a drink from the ocean

*Plant will purify salt water for community*

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Uqsuqtuq/Gjoa Haven

After more than 20 years of government neglect, clean, clear water will soon flow from Gjoa Haven's taps.

Starting in 2004, a state-of-the-art desalination plant has been approved. Desalination is a process which removes the salt from seawater. The relatively new technology is seen more commonly in desert areas such as the Middle East.

For residents of Gjoa Haven tired of worms in theirinking water, it's not a moment too soon.

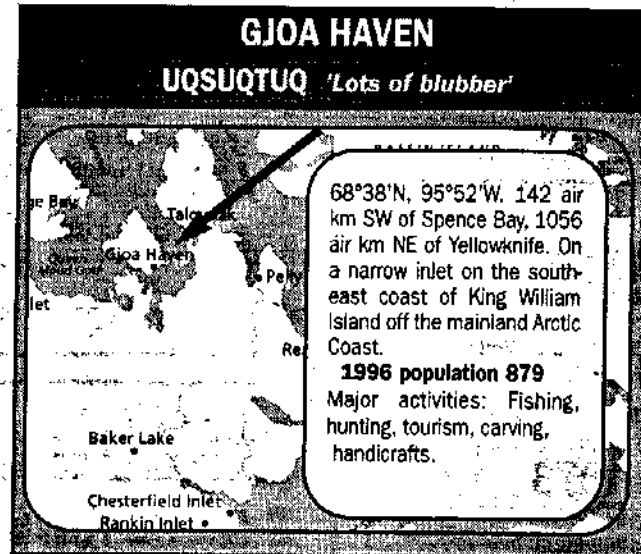
"Our community has been neglected for too long," said Gjoa Haven's mayor, Joseph Aglukkaq, soon after hearing the news.

The mayor said consultants from the territorial Department of Community Government and Transportation met with hamlet officials and outlined a variety of options to resolve the community's water problems.

In the end, "we chose the cheapest one," Aglukkaq said.

Aglukkaq noted that Gjoa Haven has a chronic housing shortage, and inadequate community learning facilities. He

he hopes the money saved selecting the cheaper option on water will be used to reme-



dy these other problems.

"We need more housing, we need more business opportunities ... our Nunavut Arctic College facility only holds about 30 people and there's way more people who want training."

Doug Sitland, manager of capital programs for the department, confirmed last week that the capital costs are the lowest of the 13 options pre-

sented to Gjoa Haven. However, "desalination plants are more expensive to operate and maintain." Still, Sitland said that over the 20-year life cycle of the proposed plant, it will still be cheaper.

The various other options involved the only two usable

lakes within 10 kilometres of the community. Sitland said a road would have been built to the lake site for trucks to fill up, or a pipeline built.

What's more, there must be a usable volume of water kept near the hamlet for firefighting.

Sitland said that as soon as the government gets official confirmation from Gjoa Haven that it wants to proceed with the desalination option, "we can close the books on the planning" and start preparing for construction, likely next summer.

Gjoa Haven's water supply has been a problem for more than two decades. Most recently, Gjoa Haven's 1,100 residents had to contend with parasitic larvae in their drinking water. The bugs did not pose a health hazard, but were large enough to see with the naked eye.

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