



For Immediate Release:
May 24, 2021

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Niagara Falls Water Board Appoints Dr. Abderrahman Zehraoui Executive Director

Niagara Falls, NY – The Niagara Falls Water Board (NFWB) today approved the hiring of Dr. Abderrahman Zehraoui as full-time Executive Director. Dr. Zehraoui is expected to begin in his new role on June 1.

Dr. Zehraoui brings a strong multidisciplinary background and more than 25 years of experience to the role. He most recently served as Director of Utilities at the City of East Chicago Utilities Department, which is comparable in size to the City of Niagara Falls.

The Niagara Falls Water Board enlisted the executive search firm Selective Staffing Solutions to conduct an extensive nationwide search for a new executive director that began in January. During the subsequent recruitment and review process, Dr. Zehraoui was identified as a top candidate based on his expertise, abilities, and interest. In addition, Dr. Zehraoui demonstrated a self-starting nature in providing an action plan as part of his interview sessions, which addressed numerous strategic approaches to improve overall NFWB facility operations.

“Dr. Zehraoui’s Moroccan roots are far from Niagara Falls but they provide the basis for a strong and innovative leader. I’m very gratified by the cooperation and commitment of the entire board as we conclude an exhaustive search. We found the right person for the job,” said Nicholas J. Forster, Chair of the Niagara Falls Water Board.

“As NFWB commissioners, we are tasked with doing what is best for our rate payers and our team. Of our excellent candidates, Dr. Zehraoui articulated not only an understanding of our pain points, but possible solutions to be more efficient while still delivering excellent service to our customers,” said Colleen Larkin, Vice Chair, Niagara Falls Water Board.

“While my education, background and experiences have prepared me for this role, I also feel passionate about providing solutions to improve operations at the Niagara Falls Water Board. This unmatched opportunity will allow me to make a significant contribution to the City of Niagara Falls by working to improve the Niagara Falls Water Board facility and the experience for our customers,” said Dr. Zehraoui. “In addition to my excitement for this position, I am also

looking forward to relocating from Indiana to Western New York. It's a beautiful area that my family and I look forward to making our new home."

Prior to his role as Director of Utilities for the City of East Chicago Utilities Department, Dr. Zehraoui served as a wastewater operations for Sodexo to manage a GE wastewater treatment plant in Houston, Texas. He has also served in various roles gaining experience in engineering and geotechnical design, wastewater treatment plant design and rehabilitation, sewer system design modeling, energy efficiency planning and management, data warehousing, and more.

Dr. Zehraoui earned his Ph.D. in civil/environmental engineering at University of Cincinnati. He continues his education through a variety of online courses and has been published in many journals and publications throughout his career.

For more information on the NFWB, go to: www.NFWB.org.

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About the Niagara Falls Water Board:

The Niagara Falls Water Board is a public benefit corporation created in 2002 by a special act of the New York State Legislature. Its mission is to provide safe and reliable water and wastewater management services to our community in an economical and efficient manner. In 2003, it acquired the drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems previously owned and operated by the City of Niagara Falls, a separate municipal entity. It owns and operates a water treatment plant, a wastewater treatment plant, a pumping station located in the Niagara Gorge, two elevated water storage tanks, seven lift stations, and more than 500 miles of water and sewer service lines. The Water Board serves nearly 18,000 residential, commercial, and industrial users. The Water Board also supplies water to and maintains the public fire hydrants in the City of Niagara Falls.



Introducing Our New Executive Director

Dr. Abderrahman Zehraoui



“ Dr. Zehraoui has a proven track record of making improvements in operational efficiency that led to significant cost savings in his previous roles. The Board’s investment in Dr. Zehraoui is an investment in making the Niagara Falls Water Board a more efficient, professional, and modern water and wastewater utility. ”

Michael J. Asklar, NFWB Board Member

“ Dr. Zehraoui has the practical hands on experience to lead the NFWB’s efforts to rebuild, retool, and restore our aging water and wastewater facilities and the supporting infrastructure for future generations of NFWB customers. ”

Renae Kimble, NFWB Board Member

“ I am proud that the board took the steps it did to ensure that the Niagara Falls Water Board will have a professional at the helm that has an enormous knowledge of both water and wastewater facilities. ”

Gretchen Leffler, NFWB Board Member

- Dr. Abderrahman Zehraoui has more than 25 years of experience in roles that have allowed him to make significant contributions to a variety of key projects in Civil & Environmental engineering. He most recently worked as Director of Utilities at the City of East Chicago Utilities Department.
- Dr. Zehraoui has worked across the country (Chicago, Cincinnati, Houston) and across the world (Morocco) participated in many trainings and expertises in Europe (France, Belgium, and others). He’s participated in many expert missions related to water resources protection, hydrology, and wastewater and landfill sites selection.
- He continues to expand his education and is currently taking online courses via University of Columbia, University of Pennsylvania, and Schneider University.
- Dr. Zehraoui has been selected to edit or contribute to various professional publications, as well as being an editorial board member and journal reviewer for the *International Journal of Environmental Bioremediation & Biodegradation* and *The Biochemical Engineering Journal*.
- In addition to speaking English, Dr. Zehraoui is proficient in French and Arabic. He’s also well versed in Italian.

www.nfwb.org



NFWB Board Members Welcome Dr. Abderrahman Zehraoui

Nicholas Forster ***Chairman, NFWB***

“For the very first time, Members of NFWB have tapped an Executive Director from outside the confines of political, family, or any other non-professional connection. No pension padding, no golden parachute contract, and no conflict or bickering amongst board members. Dr. Z’s Moroccan roots are far from Niagara Falls but they provide the basis for a strong and innovative leader. Let me add that I’m very gratified by the cooperation and commitment of the entire board as we conclude an exhaustive search. We found the right person for the job.”

Colleen Larkin ***Vice Chair, NFWB***

“As NFWB commissioners, we are tasked with doing what is best for our rate payers and our team. Of our excellent candidates, Dr. Zehraoui articulates not only an understanding of our pain points, but possible solutions to be more efficient while still delivering excellent service to our customers.”

Michael J. Asklar ***NFWB Board Member***

“The Board carefully selected Dr. Zehraoui from a very qualified pool of candidates. He has a proven track record of making improvements in operational efficiency that led to significant cost savings in his previous roles. The Board’s investment in Dr. Zehraoui is an investment in making the Niagara Falls Water Board a more efficient, professional, and modern water and wastewater utility.”

Renae Kimble ***NFWB Board Member***

“Dr. Abderrahman Zehraoui was hands down simply the best, which is why he was the NFWB’s unanimous choice. Dr. Z is an innovative, proven problem solver who has saved millions of dollars for the ratepayers in his previous position in Indiana—a fact which has been documented. Dr. Z has been involved with developing water systems and wastewater systems for millions internationally. He has the practical hands on experience to lead the NFWB’s efforts to rebuild, retool, and restore our aging water and wastewater facilities and the supporting infrastructure for future generations of NFWB customers.”

Kimble concluded by saying that “Dr. Z’s unique world view, passion, humility, and expertise in the field will be invaluable to ensuring that the NFWB’s mission of providing reliable water and wastewater management services to our community in a safe, economical, and efficient manner will soar beyond our wildest expectations. I have no doubt that he will earn the respect and admiration of the NFWB staff, ratepayers, industry and government leaders in the Western NY region throughout our state, and nation as a leader and an expert in the water and wastewater treatment industry.”

Gretchen Leffler ***NFWB Board Member***

“As a long time board member, I am proud that the board took the steps it did to ensure that the Niagara Fall Water Board will have a professional at the helm that has an enormous knowledge of both water and wastewater facilities.”