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PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release
January 10, 2018

Top Up of Policing Funding Needed and Highlights Past Shortfalls in Proper Policing

TREATY ONE TERRITORY, WINNIPEG, MANITOBA – Grand Chief of the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Sheila North welcomes the top up in funding for policing, but says this is just one aspect of creating effective policing on First Nations.

“First off, it’s hard not to see this substantial top up of funding as an admission that Canada has been underfunding policing on-reserve for years. Policing is an essential service. Poor policing contributes to community violence, crime rates, and even murdered and missing women on our First Nations,” Grand Chief Sheila North said. “We honour those who work as officers on our First Nations, but they cannot do more or the same with less. These shortfalls in funding in policing and in social programming contribute to negative statistics in our communities. So, we are happy to see this much needed funding, but it should be acknowledged that the past shortfall has contributed to the challenges First Nations have faced.”

Policing has been much discussed among First Nations in the northern Manitoba. Due to their concerns about policing, many of the communities MKO represents would like to see a First Nation police force working in the northern part of the province. In the MKO region, there is concern by some that the federal government has offloaded its responsibilities on to the provinces; however, the authority over policing should remain with the First Nations themselves.

“This funding is specifically earmarked for communities under the First Nations Policing Program, but what about those communities policed by the RCMP? Do those forces have sufficient funding and infrastructure to do a proper job? Many more First Nations are policed by the RCMP. It is time for First Nations in northern Manitoba to be policed by their own forces. Officers who associate and live alongside the people they are policing. We welcome Minister Goodale’s announcement, but it is hard not to see it as admission that much more work needs to be done to create effective police forces, with proper infrastructure and funding, on First Nations.”

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~Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. is a non-profit, political advocacy organization that has represented 30 First Nation communities in Manitoba’s North since 1981~