



# Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.

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February 23, 2021

Honourable Brian Pallister, Premier of Manitoba  
Room 204, Legislative Building  
450 Broadway  
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

## **Re: Continued collaboration needed in fight against COVID-19**

Dear Premier Pallister,

I am writing today to express the continued need for the Province of Manitoba to work closely with representatives from Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) Inc. in the continued fight against the deadly COVID-19 pandemic.

Leaders of Northern First Nations have expressed the need for increased access to supplies for carrying out rapid testing for COVID-19. Access to these supplies is needed due to the housing situation in First Nations. Overcrowded housing means that one confirmed case of COVID-19 can rapidly spread to an entire household—in First Nations, many homes have more than 10 people living within them, which provides little space for isolating. As you are aware, First Nations people in Manitoba are experiencing disproportionate impacts of COVID-19, including higher rates of deaths and hospitalization, including admissions to intensive care units.

The leaders I represent are concerned for their citizens' well-being and they grieve their loved ones who have been lost to COVID-19. As you can appreciate, they work tirelessly around the clock and are exhausted trying to prevent further transmission and ensure the safety of their communities. In addition to managing a pandemic, leaders also deal with and long-standing human rights issues of overcrowding, access to clean water, food insecurity, etc. These leaders are our unsung heroes during this war against an invisible threat.

We want to help make positive changes to save the lives of First Nations citizens. This is the time for all leaders in Manitoba to come together to fight this invisible threat. I am asking your government to continue prioritizing access to the COVID-19 vaccines for MKO First Nations citizens. Let's continue to work together on plans for vaccine distribution, including improved communication to First Nations on when they can expect to receive their vaccines.

I invite you to reach out to connect with me at any time to collaborate on strategies to address the COVID-19 outbreaks in Northern Manitoba. To arrange a meeting, please contact my Executive Assistant, Dorothy Smith, by phone at 204-918-8101 or by email at [dorothy.smith@mkonorth.com](mailto:dorothy.smith@mkonorth.com).

Sincerely,

Grand Chief Garrison Settee  
Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.

cc. *MKO First Nations*  
*Dr. Barry Lavallee, CEO, Keewatinohk Inniniw Minoayawin Inc.*  
*The Honourable Eileen Clarke, Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations*