



Manitoba Keewatinowí Okimakanak Inc.

Head Office
Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation
Nelson House, Manitoba
R0B 1A0
www.mkonation.com

Thompson Sub-Office
206-55 Selkirk Avenue
Thompson, Manitoba
R8N 0M5

Winnipeg Sub-Office
Suite 102-1700 Ellice Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3H 0B1

Office of Grand Chief Garrison Settee

January 12, 2022

Honourable Audrey Gordon
Minister of Health and Senior Care
Minister of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery
Room 302 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

RE: Request to meet to discuss the ongoing closure of the Leaf Rapids Health Centre

Dear Minister Gordon,

On behalf of Manitoba Keewatinowí Okimakanak (MKO), I am writing to request an urgent meeting with your office to address the ongoing closure of the Leaf Rapids Health Centre. MKO is concerned with the lack of consultation between the Northern Regional Health Authority (NRHA) and MKO prior to resorting to the extreme measure of closing the health centre.

With rising COVID-19 rates, we are aware provincial officials are working to provide vaccines, treatment options, testing capacities, access to rapid antigen tests, and KN95 masks throughout the province. MKO Nations would like to know about the service continuity plan for accessing provincial resources in the Leaf Rapids area. I am deeply concerned for the community of Leaf Rapids and would like to know they have access to high standards of health services.

I would also like information about when the Leaf Rapids Health Centre will be fully staffed and operational. While I understand there are significant staffing issues across health care fields, staff retention at the Leaf Rapids Health Centre is a long-standing issue. For the 580 people who rely on the health services, I would like to know when they can expect to have significant investments made into ensuring reliable health care services are accessible to them.

The closure of the health centre has resulted in patients being referred to alternative health care facilities such as Lynn Lake or Thompson. If a patient must use emergency medical transportation to move to a health care facility, transportation to return to Leaf Rapids is a challenge. There have been experiences of patients becoming homeless as part of their journey to seek health care. The provisions outlined under the Northern Patient Transportation Program do not extend to meet the actual needs of patients, which is very concerning.

MKO would like to meet with your office to discuss health services for Leaf Rapids at your earliest availability. We stress the livelihood of residents of Leaf Rapids and surrounding area depend on a collaborative approach to ensuring access to equitable and sustainable health services.

I invite you to schedule a meeting with me by contacting my Executive Assistant, Dorothy Smith, by email at dorothy.smith@mkonorth.com or by phone at (204) 918-8101.

Respectfully,



Grand Chief Garrison Settee
Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.

cc: *MKO Chiefs*
Dr. Barry Lavallee, CEO, Keewatinohk Inniniw Minoayawin
The Honourable Heather Stefanson, Premier of Manitoba
Wab Kinew, Leader of the Opposition
Grand Chief Arlen Dumas, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
Helga Bryant, CEO, Northern Regional Health
Charlene Lafreniere, Chief Indigenous Health Officer, Northern Health Authority