



Manitoba Keewatinowi 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

102-1700 Ellice Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
R3H 0B1

January 21, 2022

The Hon. Eileen Clarke
Minister of Municipal Relations
317 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

The Hon. Alan Lagimodiere
Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation
and Northern Relations
301 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

**RE: Extended closure of Leaf Rapids Health Centre during COVID-19 pandemic
Declaration of state of local emergency and restoration of essential medical services**

Dear Minister Clarke and Minister Lagimodiere,

The announced closure of the health centre in the Town of Leaf Rapids between December 27, 2021, and January 10, 2022, is continuing with no firm plan and identified restart date—despite the continuous intervention of Keewatinohk Inniniw Minoayawin Inc.—for the immediate restoration of these essential medical services to the nearly 600 residents of the Town of Leaf Rapids during a declared global SARS-CoV-2 pandemic and widespread outbreaks of COVID-19 disease in Manitoba.

Minister Lagimodiere is co-addressed in this correspondence as officials of the Province of Manitoba have advised Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) that at least 75 per cent of the nearly 600 residents of the Town of Leaf Rapids are citizens of 11 MKO First Nations, with the majority of these persons being citizens of the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation, the Mathias Colomb Cree Nation, and the O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation.

During a meeting of the MKO Executive Council on January 13, 2022, Chief Shirley Ducharme of the O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation and Chief Marcel Moody of the Nisichawayasihk Cree Nation called on MKO and the Keewatinohk Inniniw Minoayawin Inc. to take every step to secure the immediate restoration of the essential on-site medical services at the Leaf Rapids Health Centre.

Therefore, MKO urgently requests that the Minister of Municipal Relations or the Administrator immediately declare a state of local emergency and take every step to immediately restore essential medical services to the nearly 600 residents of the Town of Leaf Rapids through the re-opening, re-staffing, and re-supply of the Leaf Rapids Health Centre.

The Town of Leaf Rapids is designated as a “town” in accordance with section 4 and Schedule B of the *Municipal Status and Boundaries Regulation* under the *Municipal Act*. It is therefore under the jurisdiction and responsibility of the Minister of Municipal Relations. The Council of the Town of Leaf Rapids is deemed to have resigned. An Administrator has been appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council pursuant to sections 103 and 208(1) of the *Municipal Act*.

In accordance with section 209 of the *Municipal Act*, the Administrator acts with all the powers and responsibilities of a Mayor and Council, subject to consultation with the Minister of Municipal Relations and to the approval by the Minister of any by-laws enacted by the Administrator.

In light of the plain, obvious, significant, and continuing state of local emergency, as defined in the *Emergency Measures Act*, which has arisen due to the closure of the Leaf Rapids Health Centre, the Administrator of the Town of Leaf Rapids has a statutory duty and responsibility to declare a state of local emergency pursuant to section 11(1) of the *Emergency Measures Act*. This responsibility to declare and act upon a state of local emergency also falls upon the Minister of Municipal Relations, as the conduct of the Leaf Rapids Administrator is subject to the consultative supervision of the Minister in accordance with section 212 of the *Municipal Act*.

Following a declaration of a state of local emergency, the Minister and Administrator have the powers, pursuant to section 12(1)(j) of the *Emergency Measures Act*, to “*provide for the restoration of essential facilities, the distribution of essential supplies and the maintenance and co-ordination of emergency medical, social and other essential services.*”

MKO is deeply concerned that the Minister of Municipal Relations and the Leaf Rapids Administrator do not appear to have taken any urgent steps to secure the immediate restoration of essential medical services to the nearly 600 residents of the Town of Leaf Rapids. It is expected that a Mayor and Council in any other town or village would actively represent their residents, including to invoke emergency powers as a local authority under the *Emergency Measures Act*.

The closure of the Leaf Rapids Health Centre has resulted in the residents of the Town of Leaf Rapids being unable to reasonably access personal protective equipment (PPE) and related supplies, Rapid Antigen Tests, and the specified standard for medical grade masks required under applicable public health orders.

In addition, the closure of the Leaf Rapids Health Centre effectively denies on-site access by Leaf Rapids residents who display the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 to the monoclonal antibody treatments. These treatments are available to other residents of Manitoba and are being provided at other provincially-operated hospitals and nursing stations in First Nations.

Arranging travel to and securing accommodation in Lynn Lake and Thompson to seek PPE, access to Rapid Antigen tests and testing, masks, and to obtain monoclonal antibody treatments is not practical for most of the residents of the Town of Leaf Rapids. In addition, such prolonged travel by persons displaying the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and involving potential multiple close contacts is inconsistent with the intent of the December 31, 2021, *Self-Isolation and Contact Tracing Orders* and with the objective of the June 10, 2021, *Order Prohibiting Travel to Northern Manitoba and Remote Communities*.

Further to the above discussions and rationale, MKO reiterates our calls upon the Minister of Municipal Relations and the Leaf Rapids Administrator to declare a state of local emergency and to take all steps within their statutory responsibilities, powers, and authorities to immediately restore essential on-site medical services through the re-opening and operation of the Leaf Rapids Health Centre. MKO also requests the engagement and support of the Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Relations.

To respond to these requests, please contact my Executive Assistant, Dorothy Smith, by email at dorothy.smith@mkonorth.com or by phone at (204) 918-8101.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Garrison Settee". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Garrison" being more prominent than the last name "Settee".

Grand Chief Garrison Settee
Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.

cc: *MKO Executive Council*
MKO First Nations
The Hon. Audrey Gordon, Minister of Health
The Hon. Marc Miller, Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations
The Hon. Patty Hajdu, Minister of Indigenous Services
Administrator, Town of Leaf Rapids
Dr. Barry Lavallee, CEO, Keewatinohk Inniniw Minoayawin
The Honourable Heather Stefanson, Premier of Manitoba
Wab Kinew, Leader of the Opposition, Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Grand Chief Arlen Dumas, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
Helga Bryant, CEO, Northern Regional Health Authority
Charlene Lafreniere, Chief Indigenous Health Officer, Northern Regional Health Authority