



Manitoba Keewatinowik Okimakanak Inc.

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MKO Alarmed by Ongoing Nursing Shortages in Northern Manitoba First Nations

Treaty Five Territory, Thompson, MB – Manitoba Keewatinowik Okimakanak (MKO) Inc. is issuing the following statement in response to the ongoing reduction of services at federal nursing stations due to staffing shortages. The continued closure of nursing stations is impacting the ability of MKO citizens to receive reliable, accessible, and quality health services.

Grand Chief Garrison Settee states:

“I am deeply concerned about the ongoing closures and reduced clinical services provided by nursing stations within our MKO region. For many of our MKO First Nations, nursing stations are the only option to receive medical care. I am gravely concerned to know our citizens may not be able to access medical care when it’s needed.

First Nations citizens continue to witness the deterioration of both our provincial and federal health care systems. Nursing retention and recruitment continues to worsen. My concern for our citizens grows with each closure.

MKO and Keewatinohk Inniniw Minoayawin (KIM) continue to advocate and work with partners to ensure interruptions to health services are minimal. We are doing our best to keep health facilities open. With the ongoing nursing shortage being experienced throughout our province and country, it is important that stakeholders work together to explore every option before drastic measures are considered.

I understand that nurses, clinicians, and doctors are tired and burned out from the last two plus years of managing the pandemic. As our health care system adjusts to the reality of the nursing shortage, we need to work together to develop a strong recovery plan.

This nursing crisis is an opportunity to be innovative in developing clinical care models that support patients, First Nations, and the health care workforce. Many nursing stations have been working towards containing and managing COVID-19 for the past two years.

We need to see progress on ensuring backlogs in primary care, chronic disease care, public health, screening, and so forth are being included in recovery plans. The ramifications of reduced care over the past two years will have lasting impacts if we don’t address them now.

I anticipate the situation will last throughout the summer months before we see stabilization in the workforce. I urge our provincial and federal partners to think outside of the box and continue working with First Nations leaders and organizations to ensure we are undertaking open and transparent

planning to fill service gaps. We must work to prepare for health care needs in the short, medium, and long term, including the critical need to increase the recruitment and training of First Nations citizens to fill gaps in the health care workforce.

As First Nations people, we know what we need to be healthy. It is essential we have a role in addressing these issues. We must collaborate and ensure we are having open and clear communication with all partners as we work to address the health care needs of MKO First Nations.”

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