



## *Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.*

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*Office of Grand Chief Garrison Settee*

November 4, 2020

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

### **Re: Urgent concerns regarding uncontrolled COVID-19 outbreak at Keeyask construction site**

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

I am reaching out to you in my role as Grand Chief of Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) Inc. to express my urgent concerns with the actions of Manitoba Hydro. MKO First Nations have been engaged with Manitoba Hydro regarding concerns with the Keeyask construction site since March 2020.

We want to ensure you are aware there is an uncontrolled outbreak of COVID-19 at the Keeyask construction site in Northern Manitoba. We are trying to escalate this issue to mitigate the negative impacts that could be caused by this on the Province of Manitoba.

First Nations in communities surrounding the construction site are extremely concerned with the safety of First Nations citizens, and all staff, who are working at the Keeyask construction site. In fact, our leaders are concerned for the safety of all Manitoba residents as our rates of COVID-19 are rising rapidly and our ICU beds are at capacity. We need to work to ensure that rates of COVID-19 are not growing. We need to ensure the virus is not moving out of the Keeyask site into other areas. We need a shut down for at least 14 days to ensure this virus is not able to multiply. We also urgently need a clear plan from Manitoba Hydro on how they will provide safe isolation sites for all people leaving the Keeyask site.

Despite multiple and ongoing calls for action, Manitoba Hydro continues to ignore the concerns expressed by First Nations. We have met with the CEO twice in the last week and we still are awaiting a copy of the plan showing how the corporation plans to address the outbreak. The fact they are unable to share a plan with us at this point indicates they were unprepared for a COVID outbreak of this scale. We also need detailed information about how many people have left the Keeyask site since October 20, 2020, until today. We are concerned that the virus may have moved to various First Nations in Manitoba from the Keeyask site.

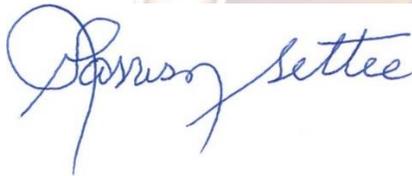
The Tataskewayak Cree Nation, Fox Lake Cree Nation, War Lake First Nation, and York Factory Cree Nation are considered as partners on the Keeyask project and yet they feel completely ignored. They are working to protect their communities but are not receiving support.

First Nations have done everything possible to protect the safety and wellness of citizens. We are asking for immediate assistance from your office to get this situation resolved with Manitoba Hydro immediately.

I am urging you to assist our First Nations on this issue. Unfortunately, this is a matter of life and death. The four First Nations who are partners in this project absolutely assistance in getting action from Manitoba Hydro. We must stop the continuing spread of the COVID-19 virus in Northern Manitoba—we all know that COVID-19 can have devastating impacts on our communities.

Please have your office contact my Chief of Staff Brennan Manoakesick by phone at (204) 795-0449 or by email at [brennan.manoakesick@mkonorth.com](mailto:brennan.manoakesick@mkonorth.com) to follow up on this urgent issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Garrison Settee". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed over a white rectangular background.

Grand Chief Garrison Settee  
Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.

cc: *MKO First Nations*  
*National Chief Perry Bellegarde, Assembly of First Nations*  
*Regional Chief Kevin Hart, Assembly of First Nations Manitoba Region*  
*Grand Chief Arlen Dumas, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs*  
*The Honourable Patty Hajdu, Minister of Health*  
*The Honourable Marc Miller, Minister of Indigenous Services*  
*The Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown Services*  
*Premier of Manitoba, Brian Pallister*  
*The Honourable Eileen Clarke, Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations, Manitoba*  
*The Honourable Cameron Friesen, Minister of Health, Manitoba*  
*Manitoba Members of Parliament*  
*Mr. Jagmeet Singh, leader, New Democratic Party of Canada*  
*Mr. Wab Kinew, Leader of the Opposition, Manitoba*  
*Ms. Jay Grewal, CEO of Manitoba Hydro*