



Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.

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MKO Implores Canada To Tackle Ongoing Infrastructure Issues Impacting Access to Safe Drinking Water for First Nations

Treaty Five Territory, Thompson, MB – Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) Inc. is issuing this statement to respond to yesterday's announcement by the Government of Canada that it will be unable to meet its target of lifting all long-term drinking water advisories in First Nations by March 2021.

"While it is disappointing that the target date to end water advisories will not be met, the announcement to invest \$1.5 billion toward meeting the promise to end all long-term drinking water advisories is encouraging," stated **Grand Chief Garrison Settee**. "This investment, however, must represent a beginning of not only ending long-term drinking water advisories, but also of tackling the larger overall problem of developing the infrastructure to provide treated, piped, running water to every house in MKO First Nations."

"The federal government, as well as all Canadians, must realize that long-term drinking water advisories over the past several decades are a symptom of a dysfunctional system that has failed to provide treated piped running water to First Nation communities," said Grand Chief Settee. "Ending long-term drinking water advisories represents only a small percentage of the work to be done within First Nations, such as the need to eliminate the use of cisterns for wastewater and water services to individual houses. Every house within MKO First Nations should have treated, piped running water as is the norm in mainstream Canada. The government needs to realize that there is a connection between providing treated, piped running water to First Nation houses and the health of MKO citizens, including our First Nations babies and children, who are the future of our Nations."

The federal government has a fiduciary duty to act in the best interest of First Nations people, including the installation of proper piped, treated running water to every house in MKO First Nations. The disparity between the quality of life between First Nations people and mainstream Canada is evidenced by the lack of proper wastewater and water systems on reserves in the MKO territory.

"The fact that Canada can provide quality running water to millions of people in urban centers and rural areas continues to point to the inequality that exists for our citizens in the mandates of governments in Canada going back decades," shared Grand Chief Settee. "It is time for new relationships that are government-to-government and Nation-to-Nation to address the important and pressing matter of proper water systems in MKO First Nations. A Nation-to-Nation relationship is another election promise the Liberal government needs to work to fulfill to address water issues in First Nations."

“MKO is open to entering into partnerships with the federal government that are innovative and evolving that will result in water systems comparable to mainstream Canada. The fiduciary obligation demands nothing less,” concluded Grand Chief Settee.

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Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO) is a non-profit, political advocacy organization that has represented 26 First Nation communities in Manitoba's North since 1981. The MKO represents more than 72,000 First Nations people.

