



Manitoba
Keewatinowi
Okimakanak Inc.

Suite 102-1700 Ellice Ave., Winnipeg, MB R3H 0B1



Shamattawa First Nation

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December 8, 2020

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

Re: Shamattawa First Nation needs urgent assistance to evacuate Elders immediately

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

We are reaching out to you in our roles as Grand Chief of Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) Inc. and Chief of the Shamattawa First Nation to express our urgent concerns with the rapidly growing outbreak of COVID-19 in the remote First Nation of Shamattawa in Northern Manitoba.

We are pleased that the Rangers are/have been deployed to assist the community along with some assistance from the Red Cross and the Bear Clan, however, there are now 264 confirmed COVID-19 cases in a community of just over 1000 people. We must escalate this issue to your office today mitigate the negative impacts this could have on the seniors in the community if we do not work to evacuate them immediately.

Health infrastructure and services are not set up to assist Shamattawa with an outbreak this large in scale. We know from the data in Manitoba that First Nations people are being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. The people from our communities are being hospitalized and put into intensive care units at higher rates than non-Indigenous Manitobans.

First Nations have done everything possible to protect the safety and wellness of citizens. We are asking for immediate assistance from your office to help us evacuate the Elders of Shamattawa to ensure they are able to safely isolate in closer proximity to health services, should they develop complications from COVID-19. We need to ensure Elders and anyone with underlying health issues are able to access emergency health services should the need arrive.

Unfortunately, the remoteness of Shamattawa means that we depend on medevacs to get people out of the community if they are experiencing medical distress. Now that it is December, the weather is unpredictable, and medevacs are not always able to land safely. This is a disaster waiting to happen.

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We are urging you to assist the Shamattawa First Nation on this issue. Unfortunately, this is a matter of life and death.

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

Sincerely,



[Original signed by]

Chief Eric Redhead
Shamattawa First Nation

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
The Honourable Harjit Sajjan, Minister of National Defence
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