



Manitoba Keewatinow Okimakanak Inc.

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MKO Demands Urgent Action on First Nations Emergency, Health, and Water Failures

In the aftermath of one of the most devastating wildfire seasons in Manitoba's history, Manitoba Keewatinow Okimakanak (MKO) is calling on the federal government to take immediate action to protect First Nations. A scathing report by the Auditor General of Canada, reveals Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) has failed to implement more than half of the recommendations made over the past decade, leaving critical gaps in emergency management, health care and water safety.

"We will no longer accept being sidelined in decisions about our own safety," said MKO's Acting Grand Chief Morris Beardy. "Leadership has been calling for a First Nations-led emergency response for years, yet ISC continues to impose top-down approaches that ignore our realities. When our Nations faced evacuations and trauma, the federal government failed to expand emergency agreements or deliver culturally grounded services. This latest failure reinforces what we've said all along: emergency management must be led by First Nations, for First Nations."

The report reveals that ISC has not increased the number of Emergency Service or Wildfire Agreements since 2022 and continues to lack performance indicators and culturally relevant emergency protocols.

Despite an 84 per cent increase in spending since the 2019-2020 fiscal year, ISC has failed to address 53 per cent of recommendations related to the delivery of health services, oral health programs, and adequate frameworks to address long-standing water advisories, and emergency management programs. The lack of ISC's progress implementing these recommendations, many of which support the objectives of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 calls to action and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan, exposes the department's inefficiencies and emphasizes the need for the co-development of ISC's service standards, policies, and regulations.

This latest AG report follows another scathing review released in June, which exposed Canada's failure to reform the First Nations registration system. Despite years of promises, the federal government continues to allow unacceptable delays and systemic barriers leaving many First Nations people without adequate health care, access to education support, and Elders without status recognition. Ottawa continues to impose top-down decisions, ignoring recommendations and maintaining control over Indigenous identity.

MKO reiterates its longstanding calls for:

A Seat at the Table: Genuine inclusion of First Nations in the co-development of policies, laws, and

systems that affect their lives—not as stakeholders, but as equal partners and rights-holders.

Respect for Self-Determination: Recognition of the inherent right of First Nations to define and govern their own citizenship, in keeping with their laws and traditions.

Sustainable Solutions: Investments in First Nations capacity to manage their own registries and deliver services, ensuring culturally safe and community-driven processes.

Acting Grand Chief Beardy further stated, *“We are not asking to be consulted after decisions are made, we are demanding to be at the table from the start. Our Nations have the expertise and the vision to solve these challenges, but Canada must be willing to share power and respect our jurisdiction. Reconciliation is not about fixing us; it is about fixing the relationship and working together as partners.”*

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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.

