



Media Release

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For Immediate Release

Hatchet Lake's health crisis worsens with Covid-19 outbreak

(Treaty 5, 6, 8 & 10) Prince Albert, SK – First Nations leaders are calling on both levels of government to provide the resources and the support needed to address the health crisis intensified by the outbreak of Covid-19 in the northern community of Hatchet Lake Denesuline Nation.

The community of 2,069 has been on complete lockdown since June 30th, and all residents are deemed a close contact and in isolation. As of today, there are 14 new confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported in the community, bringing the total to 109 cases linked to the outbreak. Of these cases, 96 are active and 13 have recovered. In total, three have been hospitalized, including two in-patient hospitalizations and one ICU hospitalization.

Hatchet Lake and most First Nations have not been given the opportunity to create and develop a health care system that could offer the members the protection they deserved. With the pandemic, it is clear that the greatest gap in health is the lack of proper housing, along with unacceptable water and sewer service, house repairs, maintenance and overcrowding.

At the present time, five trailers and five hotel rooms, which have been reserved for isolation purposes. are almost at capacity, and there is a growing concern that there will be a shortage of places to place families. There are also issues related to the community health centre operating beyond its maximum capacity, and the need for timely medical evacuation airlifts, which can take up to 9 hours or three days depending on the weather.

To help with the relief efforts, the leadership has also requested the Canadian Rangers to assist with the production of distribution of food, firewood and care packages.

Quotes

"We are dealing with a surge in cases of Covid-19, and I want to acknowledge all the people working around the clock to help us, including our emergency response team,



the frontline workers, medical staff, RCMP, and all others who have come together to help battle this situation. But we are a community in crisis and we need the resources and support of both levels of government to address foundational issues, such as overcrowding, which has caused the cases of Covid-19 to go out of control.” - *Chief Bart Tsannie, Hatchet Lake Denesuline First Nation*

“We are calling on the federal and provincial government to ensure the needs of our most remote, isolated, fly-in communities are made a priority as containing the spread of the virus is made even more difficult with underlying issues of inadequate infrastructure. Our communities are doing the best they can with the resources and facilities they have; yet, funding commitments to improve their health centre will make a difference in ensuring both their immediate and long-term health and safety.” - *Grand Chief Brian Hardlotte, Prince Albert Grand Council*

“The crowded living condition in Hatchet Lake has increased the risk of COVID-19 transmission in households. Although poor housing conditions has been a long-standing problem, the pandemic has brought this issue to the fore. This has posed a significant challenge for the public health team in containing the outbreak.

I am very concerned about serious cases that would require medevac out of the community because there are often delays in this process.” - *Dr. Nnamdi Ndubuka, Medical Health Officer, Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority*

Quick Facts

- Access to Wollaston Lake and Hatchet Lake Denesuline First Nation is provided by the Wollaston Barge Ferry during the summer.
- In November 2020, 20 members of the 4th Canadian Ranger Patrol Group were brought in to provide relief.
- In December 2015, a letter was sent to the Federal Minister of Health to seek funding for the repair, renovation and expansion of the Hatchet Lake Health Centre.
- A new sub-division for 45 lots is currently underway; however, there is only enough electricity from SaskPower to accommodate 13 houses.

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