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NEWS RELEASE

Tuesday January 27, 2009 **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

NAN RESPONSE TO FEDERAL BUDGET

THUNDER BAY, ON: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy expressed cautious optimism that federal funding for infrastructure improvements will begin to address the growing crisis faced by NAN First Nation communities following today's release of the Government of Canada's budget by Finance Minister Jim Flaherty.

"We are encouraged by the Government of Canada's pledge to include First Nations in the recovery of the Canadian economy, and we hope that a good portion of the infrastructure funding will be directed to improving the quality of life in NAN First Nations," said Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy of budget's multi-billion-dollar economic stimulus package. "First Nations must be included in the recovery of the Canadian economy. We hope this brings immediate action on infrastructure improvements that will create jobs, build safer, healthier communities, and help NAN First Nations increase their access to quality education while strengthening local economies."

Critical issues facing NAN communities include the high cost of living, high rates of unemployment, low educational outcomes, poor policing services, a housing and infrastructure crisis and a lack of access to quality health care. Many people in NAN communities live in third world conditions, with unemployment soaring to around 85 per cent and the high cost of living causing never-before-seen levels of poverty and declining health.

"Across the country, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginals alike are struggling with the effects of this economic downturn. The success of this budget will be determined not only by how it ensures economic security and personal health and safety, but by whether or not that security is equally distributed to all Canadians," said Beardy. "We hope this federal economic stimulus package will allow NAN First Nations to strengthen their ability to take advantage of economic opportunities that will arise as the economy recovers."

Beardy remains hopeful that NAN can make progress with the Government of Canada to implement rights for First Nations as guaranteed under Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution, and is ready to move forward with government-to-government relationships that will lay the foundation for a strong, healthy, and prosperous future for all Canadians.

Nishnawbe Aski Nation is a political territorial organization representing 49 First Nation communities within James Bay Treaty 9 and Treaty 5 territory – an area covering two thirds of the province of Ontario.

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