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NEWS RELEASE

Monday June 15, 2009 **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

NAN CALLS ON GOVERNMENTS TO STEP UP IN WAKE OF ARRIVAL OF H1N1 TO TERRITORY

THUNDER BAY, ON: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy, together with Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler, is calling on the federal and provincial governments to react immediately to mobilize health supports for NAN First Nations now that H1N1 has arrived to the territory.

"Our situation is very much like Mexico, where you have people living in poor and cramped conditions that needs to be taken into consideration as the governments roll out their responses to our medical health needs," said Grand Chief Stan Beardy following a teleconference today with Health Canada, where NAN was informed that there are now 13 confirmed cases of H1N1 in six NAN First Nations. "We are seeing clusters of outbreaks that have potential to move quickly through the population. We need to ensure that our people will have adequate medical attention as well as adequate medical supplies to address their health concerns if the need arises."

During the teleconference, Health Canada said existing staff could be re-deployed to communities if needed, and that it was looking at entering into a formal agreement with Ontario to bring additional medical staff and pandemic-related health supplies to First Nations that have reported cases of H1N1 outbreaks.

"Even though the World Health Organization has declared a pandemic, neither Canada nor Ontario have followed suit and yet, in our communities, H1N1 is spreading and has reached outbreak status in one First Nation. That is compelling evidence that the situation is an emerging pandemic," said Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler. "Any attempts to contain an emerging pandemic in remote First Nations is a community-wide, resource and labour-intensive operation and both levels of government must guarantee additional support such as personnel, supplies and other logistical needs are met."

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

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