



Nishnawbe Aski Nation
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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NAN SUPPORTS RALLY AGAINST SOCIAL ASSISTANCE CUTS

THUNDER BAY, ON: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Deputy Grand Chief Terry Waboose showed support for First Nations opposing proposed cuts to social assistance in the Government of Ontario's 2012 budget at a rally today in Sudbury.

"NAN First Nations do not have the resources to absorb the impacts from a reduction in social assistance and these cuts will further impoverish and endanger the health and well-being of our communities," said NAN Deputy Grand Chief Terry Waboose, who met with demonstrators walking from the Sudbury Arena to the office of Northern Development and Mines Minister Rick Bartolucci. "We will oppose any reduction in services that creates greater hardship in our communities. Ontario's economic recovery must not come at First Nations' expense."

Changes to Ontario Works Health Related Discretionary Benefits and Non-Health Related Discretionary Benefits will see funding capped instead of covering actual costs, resulting in increased costs for basic needs such as vision and dental care as well as funeral expenses. This will place a tremendous strain on First Nations already struggling to provide the basic necessities of life including access to healthy food, safe housing, health care and clean drinking water.

Canada is annually ranked as one of the top countries in the world in which to live, yet recent studies indicate that many First Nations on-reserve live in Third World conditions, including:

- one in four First Nations children is living in poverty;
- more than half of First Nations people are not employed; and
- First Nations people are four times more likely than non-Aboriginal people to live in dwellings in need of major repairs.

"NAN First Nations do not want to rely on social assistance but they simply have no choice as this government continues to exclude us from meaningful participation in the development of the resources in our traditional territory," said Waboose, who sent a letter opposing the cuts to Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty last week. "Instead of cutting assistance for some of the most vulnerable people in the province I asked the Premier to start working with us on the

development of policies and programs that will create jobs, improve lives and strengthen communities in NAN and all of Ontario.”

Today’s rally was organized by the Niigaaniin Program, a social assistance program serving First Nation clients in Mamaweswen, The North Shore Tribal Council area.

Nishnawbe Aski Nation is a political territorial organization representing 49 First Nation communities in James Bay Treaty No. 9 and Ontario portions of Treaty No. 5 – an area covering two thirds of the province of Ontario in Canada.

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