



Nishnawbe Aski Nation

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100 Back Street, Unit 200, Thunder Bay, ON P7J 1L2

Tel: (807) 623-8228 Fax: (807) 623-7730 www.nan.on.ca

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHRONIC FEDERAL UNDERFUNDING TO BLAME FOR CRISIS IN ATTAWASPISKAT

THUNDER BAY, ON: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy says that it is ‘shameful’ that the Government of Canada is trying to absolve itself from its responsibility by placing the blame for the crisis in Attawapiskat First Nation on the impoverished community’s leaders.

The federal government has placed the community in third-party management and is publicly demanding the community account for the funding it receives despite the fact the First Nations are already forced to comply with rigid reporting and financial audits that are done annually by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC).

“The reality is that Attawapiskat was already under co-management with INAC but now that it has been made public and reached a crisis stage, they are absolving themselves from any responsibility and accusing the band of financial mismanagement,” said NAN Grand Chief Stan Beardy. “The dire situation in Attawapiskat First Nation is an extreme example of the health, housing and infrastructure crisis facing all NAN First Nations, where people are forced to live in third world conditions. This is about basic human rights, jurisdiction over our homelands and the chronic underfunding from the federal government.”

The federal government’s scheme to place the community into third-party management, may in fact compound the housing crisis, as INAC policy dictates a First Nation cannot undertake any housing projects while under third-party management, warned NAN Deputy Grand Chief Les Louttit who holds the housing portfolio.

“It appears that the federal government is signalling its intention to reassert its paternalistic authority overriding the autonomy of First Nations leadership,” said Louttit. “The sad irony of this is that the federal government will have to rescind its decision before the community can begin to address its housing needs.”

“Despite the figures being thrown around by the Prime Minister in the media, the reality is that INAC has continually failed to meet the increasing infrastructure, housing, health and education needs of our First Nations,” said Louttit. “The minor capital for housing on a per-capita basis has not increased since INAC’s ‘New Housing Policy’ in 1996. It does not take into account the uniqueness of the northern communities, or the population growth. Housing shortages in NAN communities are roughly 5,000 units or \$1.2-billion.”

The province of Ontario also provides limited funding for First Nation communities while benefitting from resource extraction and development through various taxes and royalties. There is currently no legislation to ensure that government or development companies need to work with First Nations.

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. www.nan.on.ca

For more information please contact *Jamie Monastyrski, Communications Officer – Nishnawbe Aski Nation (807)625-4978 or (807) 630-7087 cell or by email jmonastyrski@nan.on.ca .*