



Nishnawbe Aski Nation

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Manitoba Keewatinowi
Okimakanak Inc.

NEWS RELEASE

Thursday April 30, 2015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NAN, MKO LOOK TO MINISTER FOR COURSE OF ACTION TO IMPROVE FIRST NATIONS HEALTH CARE

THUNDER BAY: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler and Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak (MKO) Grand Chief David Harper today urged federal Health Minister Rona Ambrose to engage with First Nations on a course of action after a scathing report by the Auditor General of Canada confirmed the continued failure of Health Canada to address the needs of First Nations.

“We were not surprised that the Auditor General confirmed what we have been saying for years – that First Nations living in remote communities are severely marginalized when it comes to access and the delivery of health care services,” said Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler. “We are calling on the Minister to work with us on a course of action to implement the Auditor General’s recommendations to improve access to health care that will save lives and improve the health of our communities.”

Released Tuesday, the Auditor General’s Spring 2015 report shows how the perception in Ottawa is far from the reality of what’s happening at the community level when it comes to access to and the delivery of health care services in remote First Nations. It found that Health Canada did not take into account community health needs when allocating support to remote First Nations, and had not implemented its objective of ensuring that First Nations people in remote communities have comparable access to clinical and client care services as other provincial residents in similar geographic locations.

Specifically, the Auditor General found that Health Canada:

- failed to ensure that its nurses working in remote First Nations successfully completed mandatory and lifesaving training;
- failed to ensure that its nurses are properly supported to provide essential health services that are outside of their scope of practice;
- failed to address building code violations that leave both nurses and patients vulnerable to numerous risks;
- failed to comply with Treasury Board Directives to ensure that medical transportation benefits are administered according to Health Canada’s own policies;

- failed to take into account the needs of the First Nations;
- failed to ensure that remote First Nations receive comparable levels of care as received by other provincial residents; and
- failed to adequately respond to priority health issues and related inter-jurisdictional challenges.

“First Nations will no longer accept inequitable services and what amounts to second-class citizenship when it comes to the delivery of health services,” said MKO Grand Chief David Harper. “Heath Canada is in agreement with each of the Auditor General’s recommendations, and we urge the Minister to make a firm commitment to work with us to bring about meaningful change.”

The Auditor General conducted an independent examination of selected health services and benefits to First Nations in Ontario and Manitoba to determine the accessibility of federal health services in remote communities. Officials visited remote First Nations to gain a community perspective on the delivery of clinical and client-care services.

NAN and MKO addressed the release of the Auditor General’s report at a press conference in Ottawa on Tuesday.

For more information please see:

News Release

www.nan.on.ca/upload/documents/comms-2015-04-28-ag-report.pdf

Auditor General Report 4 - Access to Health Services for Remote First Nations Communities

www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/English/parl_oag_201504_04_e_40350.html

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