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October 21, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau Prime Minister of Canada House of Commons Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau:

RE: NESKANTAGA FIRST NATION - URGENT PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

I am writing to you on an urgent basis today in respect of an issue that requires your immediate intervention and attention. This letter is intended only to bring the most pressing information to your attention, and I trust that you have the required background available to you.

Neskantaga First Nation has been under a 26-year boil water advisory- the longest in this country. Yesterday, Chief Christopher Moonias made the difficult decision to begin evacuating the most vulnerable residents of the community because there is no access to water in the community at all. No water to bathe. No water to flush toilets. No water servicing homes, the nursing station, the band office, the school.

We are in the middle of a global pandemic. You are aware that remote and isolated communities are even more vulnerable to the risks of the COVID-19 virus. I reiterate – **there is absolutely no access to water in this community**.

We support Chief Moonias in his decision to call for an immediate evacuation, beginning with the most vulnerable members. What is clear however, is that your government does not. I participated in a phone call this morning where senior officials from the Ministry of Indigenous Services Canada concluded on the basis of their internal analysis that "there is no public health emergency", therefore no support for this evacuation from the perspective of the federal government.

Medical professionals on the line seemed to understand the serious risk that these circumstances pose, however, still the federal government pushed back and stated that further information would be required to make a decision on whether this constitutes a public health emergency.

I am at a serious loss for words. It is simply unacceptable that instead of supporting this community in every way possible, Chief Moonias is forced to defend a decision that would have been made without hesitation everywhere else in Canada.

I will end by posing Chief Moonias' questions to you directly, since there was no response from government officials:

"Why is this not a public health emergency?"

[&]quot;Are we not important?"

"Are we not human?"

I trust that you will take this matter with the utmost seriousness and urge you to contact me immediately so that we can support Chief Moonias and Neskantaga First Nation together.

Sincerely,

NISHNAWBE ASKI NATION

Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler

cc: Chief Chris Moonias, Neskantaga First Nation
Hon. Marc Miller, Minister of Indigenous Services
Hon. Carolyn Poppett Minister of Carolyn Indigenous

Hon. Carolyn Bennett, Minister of Crown – Indigenous Relations National Chief Perry Bellegarde, Assembly of First Nations Ontario Regional Chief RoseAnne Archibald, Chiefs of Ontario