

Ontario Regional Chief Archibald Supports AFN's Call for a COVID-19 State of Emergency

(Toronto, ON, March 24, 2020) – Ontario Regional Chief RoseAnne Archibald supported the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) motion yesterday which led to the COVID-19 Declaration of a State of Emergency for First Nations across the country.

Many First Nations across Canada have already declared a State of Emergency, with some closing their borders and requiring members returning from urban centres to self-isolate for 14 days. To date, 34 First Nations in Ontario have declared a state of emergency in their communities.

"I seconded this important motion to declare a national State of Emergency for all First Nations across Canada because this is about the health and safety of our citizens. First Nations are the most vulnerable communities in the country and prevention efforts and preparation must be stepped up now. The crisis we face is serious and I've asked more communities to have a "shelter-in-place" directive in their communities and to lock down to the fullest extent possible.

I acknowledge the good work of the Premier and the Prime Minister in responding to a heightening crisis and addressing this pandemic. For First Nations leaders in Ontario, this is about the health and safety of our First Nations families and communities. We need to act now in order to preserve health and save lives.

The federal and provincial funding announced recently is a start but it is inadequate to meet the anticipated needs, and timelines, as First Nations in Ontario face realities that require unique approaches. We are 133 First Nation communities, mostly located in the north, with over 30 fly-in communities, the most in Canada. We have the most boil-water advisories, and experience overcrowding, melting ice roads, flooding, exacerbating already harmful food security issues and minimal medical assistance.

I again reiterate my support for the declaration, and the motion passed by the AFN executive calling for increased resources and support for First Nations, and that funding is provided on a "needs and equity basis." We are all in this together and governments must act now with the direct involvement of First Nations in planning and preparedness because our leaders know what is needed in their nations.

As a closing thought, I urge everyone to follow the advice of health experts and take all precautions to protect themselves, their loved ones, and their communities. We need to be working together and we need to be moving faster."

Ninanaskamon!

Ontario Regional Chief RoseAnne Archibald

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The Chiefs of Ontario is a political forum and a secretariat for collective decision making, action, and advocacy for the 133 First Nation communities located within the boundaries of the province of Ontario, Canada. Follow the Chiefs of Ontario on Facebook or Twitter @ChiefsOfOntario.

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