



## *Manitoba Keewatinowí Okimakanak Inc.*

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Dear MKO Chiefs and Councillors,

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for electing me as the Grand Chief of Manitoba Keewatinowí Okimakanak. I am prepared to work with all the Chiefs and Councillors of MKO for the benefit of all our members in our communities and those who are living elsewhere. The position and work of the Grand Chief faces a huge challenge in working to improve the social and economic conditions for our people. I hope that I can meet that challenge with your support and assistance. Therefore, my objective will be to establish and maintain good working relationships with you and to consult with you on all matters related to improving our people's situation.

As you all know, there are serious issues and situations that need to be addressed right away. Most of these have been on the table for years but some, like the H1N1 Influenza that has already caused severe illnesses in our communities, need our concerted efforts daily in order to minimize its effects this fall when the second pandemic wave is expected. I want to express upon you the seriousness of this H1N1 Influenza – it can be deadly if proper preparations are not made and acted upon. Let us not be lulled into complacency by the reports coming out of South America that say the influenza is not as serious as expected. We know our living conditions, our housing shortages and overcrowding, our lack of proper water and sewage infrastructure, our severe health problems with diabetes and its related diseases and the threat of tuberculosis, and all the shortages regarding medical treatment, equipment, supplies, facilities and personnel, in our communities – all these pose conditions for the easy and quick spread of the H1N1 Influenza. Let us work together to prepare for the expected next wave, to finish our Pandemic Plans, to make sure our Incident Command Centres are fully ready to deal with the pandemic, and to make our people feel safe from it.

I will carry on the work with you in strengthening our rights to life, to health, to good living standards, to security, to education and training for our youth so that their future may be productive, and to lands and resources that were handed down to us by our ancestors in their teachings and in the Treaties. We will work together in attaining more housing for our communities so that our people need not live in overcrowded conditions. We need to finish the water and sewer infrastructure work that is being done and we have to make sure that those communities that need that infrastructure get the commitment and funding so that they may get proper water sewer facilities.

We need to do everything in our power to help our children and youth. There are still too many who fall prey to influences that induce them to addictions and behaviours that lead to despairing and impoverished lives. I mentioned employment and training and that is only one aspect of the help they need. We need to impress upon them the benefits of applying respect, life values, and teachings in their lives so that they have strength and commitment. We also need to impress upon them that they have to make plans for their future. One of the ways is to help them understand the concept of investment and saving. Right now, our investments do not help generate revenue for our communities. That must change and our youth can be the ones to change that. Our lands and resources on our traditional territories have a lot of potential for creating wealth and the governments can no longer just come in and use those lands and resources. Our youth need to know that they can work towards making that wealth for themselves and our communities.

We have a lot of work to do. I am asking you to help me continue the work and success that our friend and colleague, the former Grand Chief of MKO, Dr. Sydney Garrioch, gave all his time and ability to during his tenure at MKO. Our efforts must not fail – we must help our people so that their lives will not continue in poverty and despair. I ask that you help me in the work to improve the lives of our people.

Thank you.



Grand Chief David Harper  
Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc.

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