



MARTEN FALLS FIRST NATION #65

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MARTEN FALLS FIRST NATION DECLARES STATE OF EMERGENCY DUE TO WASTEWATER PLANT BREAKDOWN

Thunder Bay, ON

Marten Falls First Nation is declaring a state of emergency due to an operational failure of the First Nation's aging Wastewater system. There is immediate and high risk to the health of community members who consume any water from the water system in Marten Falls.

The wastewater plant malfunctioned on Friday and immediate steps were taken to replace parts that were not working properly. Over the weekend, several other parts of the plant started to malfunction and then failed. The old lift station is beyond repair at this stage. This has led to a significant leak of wastewater and sewage into a creek that is connected to the Albany River. This is a short distance from the water intake for the First Nation's water treatment plant. This has started to cause issues with the water in Marten Falls and community members have lost trust in the quality of the water available.

Chief and Council have declared a state of emergency and issued a community advisory so that community members do not drink or use water from the water treatment plant in Marten Falls.

A recent study had shown urgent need for further investments in wastewater infrastructure. Chief and Council wrote to Minister Patty Hajdu, Minister of Indigenous Service Canada, at the start of summer 2024 to request a meeting to discuss the findings of this report and to work on a plan for the development of the wastewater plant. The Minister did not meet with us and referred us to departmental staff which has resulted in a slow bureaucratic process.

Marten Falls Chief and Council demand immediate action on the Minister's and government's part to deliver immediate and comprehensive wastewater issue resolution to Marten Falls and to meet their responsibility to Marten Falls. The First Nation will not accept a band aid solution that replaces one broken part with another band aid when we have a study available that calls for an immediate upgrade to the wastewater system. We are now at risk of the water treatment plant getting significantly impacted if it has to be shut down, in the event it starts delivering sewage to our houses, which can then add a broken water treatment plant to our list of major issues.

Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) lifted Marten Falls' boil water advisory recently. Chief and Council objected to this because our water intake system was destroyed by ice breakdown in the spring of 2022 and because the wastewater system was inadequate for the First Nation. Shortly after this incident in 2022, ISC unilaterally cut-off bottled water service to Marten Falls to showcase that the boil water advisory was no longer required and bottled water would not be funded anymore. Staff in Ottawa implement half-baked measures and refuse to acknowledge

the input and reality of people who lead and live in places that are impacted by their decision. This archaic system of colonial governance must end.

Marten Falls was also a part of the class action lawsuit that was settled on boil water. Part of that lawsuit was to implement a governance system that saw not only water treatment plants working but also waste water systems that help create a complete solution to the perennial problem of boil water advisories across Canada. Unfortunately, when you have a wastewater emergency, its consequences can be dire for a community.

Marten Falls is demanding:

- Immediate implementation of wastewater report recommendations, including the replacement of the lift station and construction of a larger facility.
- Restoration of bottled water funding to relieve financial pressure on our community.
- Long-term solutions to ensure sustainable access to clean and safe water.

About us and contact information:

Marten Falls First Nation is an Anishnaabe First Nation signatory to Treaty No 9 (signed 1905) with an overall membership of 900 members with 300 members on reserve. For further information please contact Chief Bruce Achneepineskum at:

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