



## MARTEN FALLS FIRST NATION #65

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December 16, 2024

The Honourable Patty Hajdu  
Minister of Indigenous Services  
Minister for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

*RE: State of Emergency in Marten Falls First Nation*

Dear Minister Hajdu:

We have been writing to you on matters of very high importance to Marten Falls since you became minister responsible for Indigenous Services. In my last letter to you on June 21, 2024, I highlighted two key infrastructure issues and requested a meeting with you to discuss them so we can work on next steps. One issue was lot and subdivision development while the other issue was water treatment and wastewater infrastructure.

Today I write to you to inform you that I have declared a state of emergency in Marten Falls First Nation due to an operational failure of our aging Wastewater system.

In my last letter I confirmed that a wastewater treatment study and a waste management study had been completed, and it shows urgent need for further investments in wastewater infrastructure. **The study was completed in October 2023.** We have had inaction from you or your department and today my community finds itself in a state of emergency that could have been entirely prevented.

We currently have raw sewage spewing into a creek that goes directly into the Albany River at Marten Falls. We are spending years studying ways in which we can protect our water ways when we develop a road to Marten Falls and today, we find ourselves in a state of emergency where raw sewage is going directly into our water intake system for drinking water as a result of your government's inability to meet basic infrastructure requirements that are the responsibility of your department.

We demand immediate action on your part to deliver immediate and comprehensive wastewater issue resolution to Marten Falls and to meet your responsibility to my First Nation. We 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 if it starts delivering sewage to our houses, which can then add a broken water treatment plant to our list of major issues.

Your department lifted our boil water advisory in 2022. We objected to this because our water intake system was destroyed by ice breakdown in the spring of 2022 and because our

wastewater system was inadequate for the First Nation. Shortly after this incident in 2022, your department unilaterally cut-off bottled water service to our community to showcase that the boil water advisory was no longer required and bottled water would not be funded anymore. **The defunding since 2022 has cost MFFN significant sums to provide the potable water that MFFN residents need.** 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 has to 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.

We are asking for an emergency meeting with you, your departmental staff, and an immediate commitment to fund and fix our wastewater system.

Meegwetch on behalf of Council,

Bruce Achneepineskum

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Bruce Achneepineskum', written over a horizontal line.

Chief, Marten Falls First Nation

cc:

Council of Marten Falls First Nation

Gina Wilson, Deputy Minister of Indigenous Services Canada

Qasim Saddique, Advisor MFFN

Alvin Fiddler, Grand Chief Nishnawbe Aski Nation

Abram Benedict, Regional Chief, Chiefs of Ontario

David Paul Achneepineskum, CEO, Matawa First Nations Management