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## Media Release

Wednesday, February 1, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **NESKANTAGA FIRST NATION MARK 28<sup>th</sup> YEAR IN BOIL WATER ADVISORY**

**LANDSDOWNE HOUSE, ON:** The community of Neskantaga First Nation (NFN) marked today as the 28<sup>TH</sup> year of being under a Boil Water Advisory (BWA). A major challenge for the federal government to resolve—the current BWA was first declared on February 1, 1995. It has caused the community to fully evacuate on two occasions (for 1-3 months at a time) in 2019 and 2020.

The First Nation is meeting today with The Honourable Patty Hajdu, MP, Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario to discuss a number of community issues, including the ongoing boil water advisory.

“This is not a celebratory day for our community—the suffering continues, the skin conditions, scars and mental health toll persists,” said NFN Chief Wayne Moonias. “This milestone is a reminder that we are still in crisis. It is shameful and unacceptable that our community has not been able to have clean, safe, reliable drinking water for the past 28 years.”

Over the past four years, NFN has been working with Canada to address the root causes to the longest BWA in the country by embarking on some of the following projects:

- Commissioning an independent report on: (1) the design suitability of the upgraded water treatment plant (WTP), distribution and wastewater system and, (2) the best options for a new WTP and system
- Commissioning a study to assess NFN’s current water systems and identify options for new systems that are suitable for a 20-Year Community Growth Plan
- Undertaking an investigation into the aging WTP plant upgrade project and the budget, performance and timeline challenges it continues to encounter
- Negotiating a 5-Year operations, maintenance and training contract with the Ontario Clean Water Agency (OCWA) that includes training for NFN members
- Developing a long-term “Trust in the Taps Navigators” project as part of a community wellness strategy to help people address trauma caused by the long-term water crisis
- A project to clean up used water bottle containers in the community



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“Although some progress has been made on four years of work to-date, it has not enabled a member of our community yet to be able to turn on the tap to receive clean, safe drinking water. It is certainly not the experience of any town or municipality in Canada—it is absolutely unfair for our people to be treated this way,” concluded Chief Moonias.

On January 31, 2023, our First Nation signed a Mutual Cooperation Accord with Asubpeeschoseewagong Anishinabek (Grassy Narrows), Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug, and Wapekeka First Nation. This agreement reaffirms our commitment to work together in protecting the Land and Water of our Homelands, as well as our ways of life.

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*Neskantaga First Nation is situated in Northern Ontario on Attawapiskat Lake, 471 kms north east of Thunder Bay, Ontario. It is a remote community accessible only by air or winter ice-road. It has over 500+ band members.*

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