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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NESKANTAGA FIRST NATION REFUSED EVACUATION OF VULNERABLE PEOPLE AFTER WATER PUMP AND BACK UP WATER PUMPS BREAK DOWN

NESKANTAGA: Neskantaga First Nation issued an elevated Statement of Emergency (SOE) with respect to the denial of an emergency evacuation request made to Indigenous Services Canada this morning due to an exacerbated water crisis. On Thursday, they experienced a break down in water-pump and back-up water-pump. This has resulted in unfiltered/contaminated water with low pressure running through community taps. Some community members are not receiving water. They say this is an extreme crisis. This situation has also resulted in the closure of the school until an undetermined date.

Neskantaga First Nation is appalled with the federal government's response and are calling for the immediate emergency evacuation of 188 people most directly affected. This includes those designated Stage 1 Chronic, who are: 50 females, 37 males, 72 children (2 years old+), Elders, and 17 infants (under 2 years). At least 10 patients so far are being treated for skin infections by the nursing station which is only open for emergencies due to this current water crisis.

The community is extremely concerned about the effects this will have and already people have reported beginning to experience headaches and fevers. They are concerned that the manner in which their water crisis is being responded to by the federal departments, including an environmental health officer, equating it to a "boil your water for one-minute" issue minimizes the severity of the situation.

Chief Chris Moonias concluded with the following statement: "This continued water crisis goes beyond boiling contaminated water—the bigger issue is that Peoples' basic fundamental human rights are being contravened and continually ignored. It's unbelievable that Canada, one of the riches countries in the world, continues to condone this kind of injustice on our vulnerable—children and Elders especially."

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