



## **COMMUNITY NOTICE: NEW BORDER RESTRICTIONS IN EFFECT DUE TO INCREASING RISK OF COVID-19**

**December 5, 2020**

EFN Chief and Council have been working with the CERT team and public health authorities to carefully monitor the increasing risk of COVID-19 in Thunder Bay and surrounding areas, as we know most families are as well. As the cases in Northwestern Ontario are rising sharply (moving to 'Orange zone' on Dec 7), it is clear that the increasing danger of COVID-19 transmission throughout Canada is at our doorstep. The risks to EFN members of contracting COVID-19 while travelling have become so high that Chief and Council have unanimously decided to further tighten the border control measures for a defined period of **December 10 – Jan 3rd**. These actions are being taken to preserve the safety and wellbeing of the community.

By using our remoteness as a strength, we can work towards a 'community bubble' that may enable community members to enjoy fewer local restrictions while keeping the community much safer than the rest of Ontario. **By stopping all arrivals on Dec 10<sup>th</sup>, then after 14 day quarantines are over, we will be able to enjoy additional community Christmas activities by Dec 24<sup>th</sup> and throughout the holidays.** We have heard from community members and understand that this year has required many sacrifices from us all. It will be such a welcome reprieve and mental health break if we are successful in establishing a community bubble for Christmas. With this goal in mind for the collective protection and health of the community, the following restrictions are being put in place.

### **SUMMARY OF TIGHTER BORDER RESTRICTIONS in effect Dec 10 - Jan 3rd:**

- **No regular passenger flights outbound, only CERT & Council approved medical travel**
- **CERT will no longer be reviewing passenger travel requests until these measures are lifted**
- **EFN members currently travelling for approved medical or other essential travel will have until December 9th to return home, full border closure will take effect from Dec 10-Jan 3rd**
- **STUDENTS and other EFN members wishing to return for the holidays, must return by Dec 9 and will not be permitted entry from Dec 10 onwards**
- **Only CERT approved charters will be incoming and outgoing for essential services:**
  - **NAPS, health & mental health care providers, essential community infrastructure, etc.**
- **All persons arriving must follow EFN CERT 14 day quarantine protocols**
- **Personal and business freight will be allowed, but under new safe freight handling procedures to be scheduled through CERT so Christmas shopping & deliveries can be shipped**
- **CERT team and Chief and Council will be hosting information sessions on the radio and online**
- **Chief and Council will be working with NIHB/ISC to ensure medical care is provided, especially if your appointments need to be adjusted due to this community safety measure**
- **Chief and Council will issue a notice prior to Jan 3rd if the measures will be extended**
- **CERT will be meeting with Chief and Council regularly and receive direction by a quorum of Council as outlined in EFN Council Motion of Nov 18, 2020 and BCR #2-3 of April 10, 2020**

**We appreciate you all!** EFN members have been doing a great job of abiding by community health protocols in order to reduce the risk of COVID-19 spreading among our community. Looking back at the spring and summer months, you are all to be commended for your sacrifices and the role everyone has played in protecting each other, especially when we had active cases and were able to effectively isolate and manage those situations. EFN Chief and Council are now asking you to abide by this decision and follow the procedures to be implemented by CERT and our EFN Administration to help keep our community a safe place where we can enjoy more freedoms and activities than those in other parts of the country. If we maintain a strong border over the coming weeks, we may be able to have a much safer and family-focused Christmas season. **Chief and Council will continue to monitor the situation closely and will be informing the community if and when the risk levels change in Thunder Bay or locally.**

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS & CLARIFICATIONS**

**Q:** Why is this starting at this point?

**A:** The primary concern is to protect our vulnerable population, and the risks of COVID-19 transmission throughout Northwestern Ontario have risen sharply. We are putting these measures in place to reduce the risk for all our community members and to avoid implementing tighter local community restrictions as long as possible. If we are successful in stopping all travel from Dec 10 onwards, we have a good chance at creating a bubble of increased safety here in Eabametoong.

**Q:** I think I understand why EFN Chief and Council wants to cut down on passenger travel back and forth from Thunder Bay and other areas with increasing COVID-19 risks, but I don't understand why travel needs to cease by December 9th. Can you explain that?

**A:** There is already a passenger travel restriction in effect. We are asking that any approved travellers return home from their appointments by Dec 9th. From Dec 10-Jan 3, we will not be allowing returns. The only exceptions to this will be for urgent or emergency medical care.

If our community members take this to heart and abide by the 14 day quarantine rule, then by Dec 24<sup>th</sup> we can even plan for Christmas activities. Over the next couple of weeks, we'll be seeking your input and feedback into options for changing the public health measures within the community and considering what kind of activities can be safely held over the holidays. The following chart might be helpful in visualizing how the restrictions are to work:

	December 5-9	Dec 10 - Jan 3	Jan 4 onwards
Outgoing Passengers	Not permitted	Not permitted	To be determined
Returning Passengers	Permitted	Not permitted	

**Q:** So if passenger flights aren't being allowed during this time, how will we get our regular freight shipments and any food or other supply orders we are planning to make?

**A:** EFN Chief and Council and CERT will be working with our airline partners to develop an adjusted schedule for freight flights, as well as implementing a safer freight receiving and handling procedure. More information will be coming over the next few days on any impacts to food orders or pre-ordered freight. We want to keep the freight service as reliable as possible for the community, so it is easier to manage the transition to no passenger flights over the Dec 10-Jan 3 period.

**Q:** What about high school, college, or other students and workers who would normally be returning to the community for Christmas to spend this time at home with family?

**A:** Chief and Council are asking any students and other members to return by Dec 9<sup>th</sup>. This will require adjustments to schoolwork and other schedules, but will be a huge benefit to the community to be able to enjoy time together after quarantine from Dec 24<sup>th</sup> onwards.

**Q:** What about the EFN approved list of essential workers, nurses, contractors, etc? How come they are allowed to enter the community and our members can't come and go?

**A:** Good question. We appreciate that not everyone has been informed about the pre-quarantine restrictions for our essential service providers. All persons entering the community must abide by pre-isolation and quarantine procedures and COVID testing, and those are put in place for Nurses, NAPS, other contractors or essential service providers. These protocols have helped to protect the community, as well as ensuring that we can maintain health care and other local infrastructure or other vital services for our community during this time.