

# NEWS RELEASE

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## FWFN, NAN Call for Action to Support Pandemic Response in Thunder Bay as COVID-19 Cases Rise

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**FWFN, ON:** Fort William First Nation (FWFN) Chief Peter Collins and Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler are calling on all levels of government, relevant agencies and organizations to take decisive action as COVID-19 cases continue to rise in the City of Thunder Bay, a major hub for communities across Northwestern Ontario.

"Fort William First Nation is in full support of the City of Thunder Bay in its appeal to the provincial and federal levels of government to provide the necessary increase of assistance to effectively manage the rapid surge of COVID-19 cases. In order to manage and reduce this concerning crisis, we need our governments to act on this request immediately, for the health of all our citizens of Thunder Bay, and First Nation communities," said Chief Peter Collins.

During a press conference yesterday, Thunder Bay Mayor Bill Mauro appealed to the provincial and federal governments for assistance as COVID-19 cases have reached a record high. The City has declared two states of emergency and is requesting additional supports for isolation shelters and health human resources.

"Thunder Bay is in a precarious situation, and there is growing concern as government ministries, health organizations and health units struggle to contain the spread of this virus. Moving back to lockdown across Northwestern Ontario will be painful, but is necessary as COVID-19 cases continue to rise. Additional supports and stricter measures are required now. We cannot wait until province-wide triggers are agreed upon. Whoever has their hand on Ontario's alleged 'emergency brake' needs to pull it before this turns into a regional crisis," said Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler.

The City declared a second state of emergency following outbreaks in two correctional facilities and among the homeless population. Ontario's Section 22 order requires people who are released from correctional facilities to self-isolate. Many have been sent to hotels in Sioux Lookout, Thunder Bay and Timmins, but there is little in place to assist them. A wraparound effort is required to ensure that these individuals are supported to protect the health and safety of the public.

Additionally, many educational institutions in the Thunder Bay region are not equipped with adequate protections and other measures to ensure the safety of students, staff, and their families. If schools cannot be immediately provided the necessary resources for proper ventilation and social distancing, then they need to close, and they should not reopen until these issues are addressed.



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