

# Eabametoong First Nation

Fort Hope Indian Reserve #64  
P.O. Box 298  
Eabamet Lake, Ontario  
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March 25, 2021

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau  
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Honourable Marc Miller  
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Honourable Greg Rickford  
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**RE: Immediate need to address the compounding Housing emergency, COVID-19 pandemic and multiple crises in Eabametoong First Nation**

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau and Premier Ford:

Eabametoong First Nation members are suffering. We have 17 people currently living in tents and shacks out in the cold, who have managed to survive -40C nights this winter and it is still snowing. In addition to this brutal reality, ironically on World Water day (March 22) our water treatment system had to be shut down due to inadequate system design and have now written to ISC requesting bottled water support.

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EFN Chief and Council wrote to you on April 12, 2020 to request emergency assistance when we had a confirmed COVID-19 case in the community. In that letter, we identified the serious and compounding impacts that COVID-19 would likely have upon EFN due to our infrastructure crisis and well-known community health vulnerabilities. Our concerns have been realized, and we are living with multiple emergencies that are being exacerbated by COVID-19, but exist due to the history of colonial oppression.

With the assistance of Provincial and Federal partners, EFN has so far managed to suppress and isolate COVID-19 cases when they have been confirmed. However, the pandemic response measures have not been adequate to provide reasonable cold weather isolation accommodations for our community, especially with our chronic overcrowding and poor housing conditions. As this pandemic drags on, it has also exacerbated significant mental and physical health issues among our people living in the community and off-reserve.

Living in this perpetual crisis-response existence has to end. This can no longer be simply a Federal or Provincial responsibility, but a joint partnership towards action must be formed. For decades, Ontario has not been an equal Treaty partner in supporting community needs, but enabled the exploitation of resources. Today is an opportunity for both Ontario and Canada to depart from harmful colonial practices and move forward in reconciliation based on the Treaty. We have so much to offer and contribute to a prosperous future. That must begin with caring for basic human rights. Our people need immediate assistance to stop the suffering, meaningful steps forward on plans we have already developed together, and a commitment to long-term solutions and prosperity. We are proposing a way forward on all of these critical fronts and asking for your partnership:

## 1) IMMEDIATE CRISIS-RELIEF ACTION

- Rapid deployment of 20x modular units to shelter the homeless
- Emergency funds to renovate 25x homes with significant mould & unhealthy conditions, including a spreading cockroach infestation
- Confirmation of adequate 2021-22 COVID-19 Indigenous Community Support Funds so our community staff can retain knowledgeable and effective local staff and improve upon lessons learned this year, including health and mental health supports
- Develop an understanding of partnership with EFN to chart a path beyond emergency relief to assess the current housing and infrastructure situation and establish a Joint Federal and Provincial Working Group with EFN to guide our next steps