



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 13, 2021

AMC demands Manitoba Hydro expedite restoration of power to Little Grand Rapids and Pauingassi First Nations

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) issues this press release today to react to the unacceptable response by Manitoba Hydro to the loss of power to Little Grand Rapids and Pauingassi First Nations. The 1,500 citizens of Little Grand Rapids and Pauingassi continue to languish in hotel rooms in Winnipeg due to Manitoba Hydro’s neglect and failure to expedite the restoration of power to these First Nations. The people were originally evacuated almost two months ago due to forest fires which also destroyed hydro poles. With school starting, children from Little Grand are being forced to learn in their hotel rooms until power is restored in the communities in “four to six weeks.”

Grand Chief Arlen Dumas said, “the response to the power outage in Little Grand and Pauingassi by Manitoba Hydro is completely unacceptable. It is even more egregious that Hydro has not apprised the leadership of the status of the situation. We have all had to depend on news stories to get information. This crisis situation could have been completely avoidable if a state of emergency had been declared at the appropriate time. When power was knocked out to non-First Nations communities during the ice storm two years ago, a state of emergency was declared, and power was restored within a week or two to most of the towns and municipalities. Now, when First Nations are the only ones affected, suddenly there are all kinds of excuses about the terrain and weather making it difficult to replace the poles.”

“The people are becoming traumatized by this neglect and having to stay in single hotel rooms with as many as five other family members,” stated Grand Chief Dumas. “We appreciate the financial contributions and efforts made by some of the urban Indigenous organizations and tribal councils to alleviate some of the stress for the families and children; however, if this were a situation involving a non-First Nation community, a declaration of emergency would have been made and no expense would be spared to accommodate and comfort community members, including providing generators and other emergency equipment so that people can be safely repatriated.”

“Manitoba Hydro was not forthcoming with information to the leaderships and did not have the courtesy to update or advise the AMC on progress towards replacing the hydro poles. Unfortunately, this has been the pattern of behaviour for Hydro for several decades and it is almost impossible to change the ingrained corporate attitude that is at the root of the disrespect for our people,” added Grand Chief Dumas.

“But we will continue to push the provincial government to enact some of the relevant recommendations from the Brad Wall report so that Hydro’s relationship with First Nations can finally be one of more respect and common decency. In meantime, I am calling on Indigenous Services to declare a state of emergency and for Manitoba Hydro to pull out all the stops to restore power to Little Grand and Pauingassi so that families can be repatriated, return to community life and children can safely return to learning in actual classrooms for the start of the school year,” concluded Grand Chief Dumas.

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About the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

The AMC was formed in 1988 by the Chiefs in Manitoba to advocate on issues that commonly affect First Nations in Manitoba. AMC is an authorized representative of 62 of the 63 First Nations in Manitoba with a total of more than 151,000 First Nation citizens in the province, accounting for approximately 12 percent of the provincial population. AMC represents a diversity of Anishinaabe (Ojibway), Nehetho / Ininew (Cree), Anishininew (Ojibwe-Cree), Denesuline (Dene) and Dakota Oyate (Dakota) people.