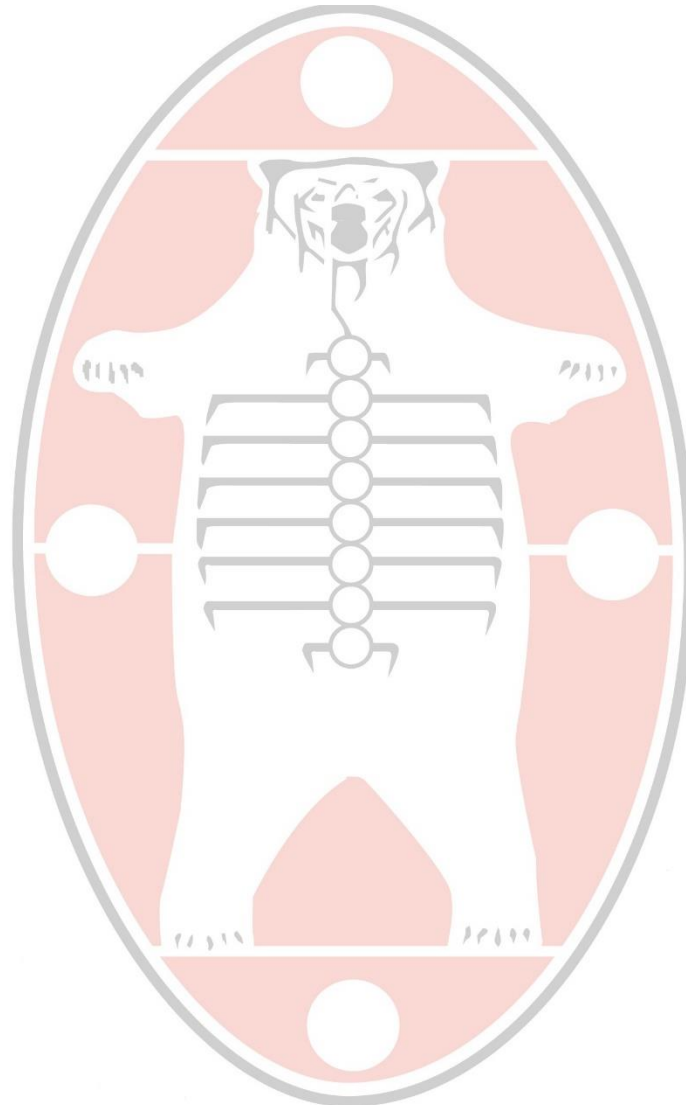




Nishnawbe Aski Nation

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Submission to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs

Fire Safety and Emergency Management in Indigenous Communities

Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler, Nishnawbe Aski Nation
December 5, 2017

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1.0 Introduction

On March 29, 2016, around midnight, Amanda Sainnawap-Peters got a frantic phone call in Thunder Bay from her brother in Pikangikum. Her sister Sylvia was missing.

"I can't find her," he told Sainnawap-Peters. "There's a house on fire, and I can't find Sylvia."

Police were on the scene within five minutes, but there was nothing they could do. Flames were already shooting out of the home's north window.

Pikangikum's only fire truck did not have water in it when the call came in. Roley Peters, the reserve's fire chief and only firefighter, struggled to get the truck over roads so buckled by frost heaves that fire investigators later called them "nearly impassable".

The fire destroyed everything. Even the home's metal fridge melted.

The only things left burning were the bodies.

- Excerpt from *Fire and Death in Canada's First Nations*, by Alicja Siekierska and Jesse Winter, Toronto Star, February 24, 2017

1.1 NAN Submission

Nishnawbe Aski Nation is pleased to present this written submission to assist the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs (INAN) with its study on Fire Safety and Emergency Management in Indigenous Communities.

NAN appreciates that the Committee is studying fire safety and emergency preparedness in Indigenous communities, including the threats and impacts of forest fires and other emergency situations that threaten the health and well-being of our 49 First Nations communities.

We have been invited to contribute specifically to the issue of fire protection and prevention, which is the focus of this submission. The impacts of forest fires and our communities' ability (or lack thereof) to plan to and respond to such emergencies are separate but serious issues that demands attention. Given the opportunity we would be pleased to provide additional information to address these.

1.2 About Nishnawbe Aski Nation

Nishnawbe Aski Nation (known as Grand Council Treaty No. 9 until 1983) was established in 1973 representing the legitimate, socioeconomic, and political aspirations of its First Nation members to all levels of government in order to allow local self-determination while establishing spiritual, cultural, social, and economic independence.

In 1977, Grand Council Treaty No. 9 made a public declaration of the rights and principles of Nishnawbe Aski, to Ontario Premier William Davis on July 6 in Toronto and presented to Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau on July 11 in Ottawa. These rights include:

- The right to receive compensation for our exploited natural resources.
- The right to receive compensation for the destruction and abrogation of our hunting, fishing and gathering rights.
- The right to renegotiate our Treaty as understood by our people, land and resources.
- The right to approach other world nations to further the aims of the Cree and Ojibway Nations of Treaty No. 9.

Today, NAN represents 49 First Nations with a total population (on and off reserve) of approximately 45,000 people grouped by Tribal Council. NAN territory encompasses James Bay Treaty No. 9 and the Ontario portion of Treaty No. 5, a land-mass covering two-thirds of the Province of Ontario, spanning 210,000 square miles. Our people traditionally speak Cree and Algonquin in the east, Ojibway in the west, and Ojibway in the central south area.

1.3 Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs

Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs (INAN) reviews, examines and reports on issues affecting Aboriginal Canadians and northerners.

The Standing Committee's mandate includes all areas covered by the federal department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, whose legal name remains the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The Committee can study any aspect of the Department's management and operation, as well as legislation, programs or policy areas administered by the Department. Traditionally, the Department has taken responsibility primarily for on-reserve registered First Nations people, Inuit and northern or territorial affairs. In turn, the Committee has primarily considered legislation and issues related to these populations and subjects.

The Committee may also look into other government programs and services developed for on-reserve First Nations people. It can examine issues, policies and programs related to off-reserve registered and non-registered First Nations people, Métis, and Inuit. As of 2004, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has been assigned the additional role of Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians.

2.0 Overview

2.1 Fire Danger in NAN First Nations

The 2007 report *Fire Prevention in Aboriginal Communities* by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation found that fire losses (deaths, injuries and destruction of property) in First Nation communities, particularly those on remote First Nations lands, far exceed those in comparable off-reserve communities.

It concluded that the First Nations per capita fire incidence rate is 2.4 times the per-capita rate for the rest of Canada. The death rate is 10.4 times greater; the fire injury rate is 2.5 times greater; and the fire damage per unit is 2.1 times greater.

Currently, just 19 of NAN's 49 First Nation communities even have a designated Fire Chief.

Tragic house fires are common in NAN First Nations, the majority of which are isolated and remote, accessible only by air and an increasingly unstable seasonal winter road network.

This grim reality received national attention as a savage house fire in Pikangikum First Nation claimed nine lives in the remote northern community on March 29, 2016. The community is struggling to recover from the loss of an infant and three generations of one family: Dean Strang, 51; Annette Strang, 49; Gilbert Strang, 31; Sylvia Peters, 41; Dietrich Peters, 35; Faith Strang, 24; Ireland Peters, 4; Aubree Strang, 2; Amber Strang, 5 months.

A 2013 fire in Wunnumin Lake First Nation year claimed the lives of two children, aged six and one, and their 21-year old aunt. A 2011 fire in Nibinamik First Nation claimed the lives of two young boys (aged 2 & 3) and injured a third child.

House fires are especially devastating in remote communities where overcrowding is the norm and entire families are left homeless every time a home is lost.

A 2008 fire in Kashechewan First Nation left a family of 11 homeless after destroying the home of the late NAN Elder George Wesley, the father of Ricardo Wesley who died in a 2006 jail fire along with Jamie Goodwin. An inquest into their deaths (the Kashechewan Inquest) garnered national attention on the inadequacies of community safety and firefighting resources in remote First Nations.

Since then, there have been numerous inquests, studies, reports and recommendations to improve fire protection and prevention in NAN First Nations. Few have been acted upon.

In 2016 it was revealed that, since 2010, Indigenous and North Affairs Canada stopped tracking on-reserve fires because they were a "burden" to First Nation communities. This is insulting to the memory of those we have lost, and shows a callous disregard for the health and safety of our communities. Knowing the scope of the problem is a key first step. It is difficult to comprehend how the federal government can effectively implement strategies without baseline statistics.

2.2 National Attention to a National Problem

Fire tragedies in NAN First Nations have, and continue to receive national attention from the news media.

This spring, NAN worked closely with Toronto Star journalists Jesse Winter and Alicja Siekierska for the feature *Fire and Death in Canada's First Nations*. This investigation highlighted the heartbreaking losses that continue to result from substandard housing and the lack of fire protection services in the majority of our communities, and was a finalist for the Knight Award for Public Service at the 2017 Online Journalism Awards.

Other features include:

- *Northern Ontario First Nation Declares State of Emergency After Fire Contaminates Reservoir: MP*
Global News - June 8, 2017
"A northwestern Ontario Member of Parliament says a state of emergency has been declared in Eabametoong First Nation following a fire near the community's water purification plant's reservoir."
- *Indigenous Leaders Call for Coroner's Inquest into First Nations Fire Deaths*
CBC News - March 30, 2017
"Indigenous leaders call for a coroner's inquest into fire safety in NAN First Nations on the one-year anniversary of a house fire in Pikangikum, a remote community more than 500 kilometres north of Thunder Bay, Ont., that killed nine people, including three children under the age of five."
- *Fire Safety on First Nations a National Problem*
CBC - Jan 27, 2014
"The 2014 death of two young boys in a house fire in Ballantyne Cree Nation highlights the shortfalls of firefighting services and the importance of fire prevention as many reserve homes fall short of national fire codes."
- *Michael's Essay: Fire Safety is Out of Bounds in First Nations*
CBC - April 3, 2014
"Michael Enright debunks the notion that problems can't be fixed by throwing money at it when First Nations are desperately in need of more funding for firefighting infrastructure. Notes that 322 First Nations in Canada have to share \$26 million in fire prevention on reserves – far too little."
- *Kashechewan Jail Fire a Dark Chapter, Inquest Told*
CTV News - April 30, 2009
"The excruciating deaths of two aboriginal men arrested for public intoxication marked another dark chapter in Canada's shameful history of neglecting First Nations people and must never be repeated, a jury was told Thursday at the inquest into a jailhouse fire at an isolated northern Ontario reserve."

2.3 Root Causes of Tragedy

A 2010 federal study on fire safety on reserves found that people living on First Nation reserves are 10 times more likely to die in a house fire than people in the rest of Canada.

With responsibility over fire protection falling to individual First Nations, fire inspection regimes are not uniform and vary from community to community. Guidelines adopted in the terms and conditions of funding arrangements are not always followed and there is currently no compliance mechanism in place.

The lack of firefighting services and substandard housing in NAN communities is a deadly combination that has claimed too many lives. Many homes do not meet building codes and rely on dangerous wood stoves for heat. House fires quickly turn lethal when without smoke detectors or fire extinguishers and communities don't have the equipment to respond.

2.4 Kashechewan Inquest

Tragedy struck Kashechewan First Nation on January 8, 2006 when fire broke out in a makeshift holding cell at the local police detachment in this remote Cree community on the west coast of James Bay.

Ricardo Wesley, 22, and Jamie Goodwin, 20, burned to death while the community was powerless to save them. An inquest into their deaths was held in 2009 (the Kashechewan Inquest¹), which garnered national attention on the inadequacies of policing and firefighting resources in remote First Nations.

At the time, Kashechewan's population was 1,600 people. They had a trained a volunteer fire department but lacked vital firefighting equipment. Fire trucks, which had been recently acquired, could not be delivered until construction of a fire hall was completed. Without the necessary infrastructure, the community was unable to respond to fires.

The coroner's jury heard that the Kashechewan police station lacked a working smoke detector, fire extinguisher and sprinkler when the fire tore through the dilapidated building.

The jury delivered 86 recommendations including increased federal and provincial funding for fire safety and improvements to First Nation police facilities, many of which remain far below provincial standards. The jury also recommended that the federal and provincial governments should provide adequate money for annual fire inspections of all police detachments in NAN territory and additional fire response training for officers.

The Kashechewan fire was a tragic example of the appalling deficiencies in community safety in remote First Nations. Ten years later the inadequacies in firefighting services combined with substandard housing continues to put lives at risk.

The coroner's jury from the inquest into the Kashechewan fire delivered 86 recommendations (attached), including that:

- First Nations, Canada and Ontario should work together to develop a fire safety model that closely resembles that which applies to municipalities and includes an enforcement mechanism.
- Nishnawbe Aski Nation, in consultation with the Ontario Fire Marshal's office, should develop and implement models for the delivery of services and programs for fire protection, prevention and safety, consistent with s. 2(1)(a) of the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act*.

3.0 Federal Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 Fire Safety and Emergency Management in Indigenous Communities

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted on October 5, 2017, the Standing Committee has commenced a study on Fire Safety and Emergency Management in Indigenous Communities. The Committee will examine emergency measures in communities, traditional territories, as well as fire services in the communities.

Our understanding is that two federal departments, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, are responsible for fire safety and emergency management in Indigenous communities, the roles and responsibilities of which are summarized (from testimony by the respective departments) below:

Indigenous Services - Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development

As with any community in Canada, the responsibility for emergency management on-reserve starts with First Nation communities as the first level of response. When an emergency event exceeds the capacity or capabilities of the communities, they seek assistance from the provincial or territorial government, and if necessary, from the federal government.

Currently, the department supports First Nation communities during emergency events through the Emergency Assistance Program. This program supports four pillars of Emergency Management: 1. Preparedness; 2. Mitigation; 3. Response; and 4. Recovery.

For response to emergencies, the Emergency Management Assistance Program reimburses First Nations, municipalities, provinces, and territories, as well as third-party emergency management service providers, up to 100% of eligible response and recovery costs, including costs of evacuations. Eligibility is determined according to the program's terms and conditions.

In recent years, events such as wildfires and floods are increasing in frequency, severity, and magnitude. These events can result and have resulted in severe social, environmental, and economic consequences for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities.

However, due to their relative remoteness and isolation in fire-prone areas, many First Nation communities are more vulnerable to emergency events and the vulnerability can be exacerbated by remoteness or access to services during emergency events.

Despite making up less than 1% of Canada's population, one-third of wildfire evacuations over the last three decades in Canada have involved on-reserve Indigenous communities.

During the immediate response phase of emergency events, communities leverage existing service delivery capabilities within First Nations, municipalities, provinces, territories and third-party emergency management service providers such as the Canadian Red Cross.

Access to the services beyond the First Nations capacity is secured through comprehensive Emergency Management Service Agreements between the department and the provinces or territories. Service agreements ensure that First Nation communities have access to comparable emergency assistance services to those provided to neighbouring communities and non-indigenous communities. Five agreements are currently in place. Where an agreement is not yet in place, historical arrangements are in place, or other mechanisms to ensure a comparable level of service to those offered elsewhere in the province or territory.

In the recovery phase of an emergency event, the department supports the repair or restoration of critical infrastructure on reserve to a pre-disaster condition to allow evacuees to return home. With the increase in wild land fire activity and increasingly strained fire suppression efforts, ensuring sustainable community recovery is becoming more and more critical.

First Nations manage fire protection services on reserve. Community officials make the decisions regarding fire protection services under the annual core capital funding they receive from the department. First Nations may establish their own fire departments or contract fire protection services from nearby communities.

Public Safety - Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness

The Department of Indigenous Services has a lead role in working with the provinces and territories regarding emergency management to ensure First Nations communities receive necessary response and recovery services.

Following events like the 2017 forest fires in British Columbia, it conducts a review of the measures taken to fight forest fires. Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada does this exercise in partnership with other departments such as Indian Affairs and Northern Development. The main observations become lessons learned, and are applied to future incidents.

The Government Operations Centre (GOC) is an interdepartmental organization that supports the minister in his leadership and coordination role in emergency measures. The purpose of its interventions is to direct and support the coordination of the federal response to events affecting the national interest.

Each year, in consultation with partners such as Natural Resources Canada and Environment and Climate Change Canada, the GOC conducts comprehensive planning processes to increase federal preparedness to support the provinces, territories and First Nations for potential wildfire events. However, gaps with the level of support to, and inclusion of, First Nations communities in the coordination of firefighting operations, has been identified as an important issue that needs to be addressed.

3.2 Gaps in Legislation

Currently, there is no legislation regulating fire protection services for First Nation communities. Provincial municipalities are mandated to establish a program which includes public education for fire safety and provide fire protection services (Ontario Fire Protection Act). In Ontario, fire safety standards for equipment, systems, buildings, structures, land and premises are regulated through the Ontario Fire Code. Due to the remote location of rural First Nation communities it is impossible for them to partner with municipalities to receive fire prevention services from them.

First Nation communities do not fall under national or provincial building or fire code standards and they cannot be enforced by the federal government. It is left up to the community to mandate and enforce these codes. Poorly constructed housing coupled with poorly resourced fire departments are contributing factors to the high death rates due to fires in First Nation communities.

Core capital funding is provided by INAC, to communities on an annual basis. Chief and Council are to prioritize spending to meet the needs of their community and determine how fire protection services will be met with this funding. First Nations are responsible for establishing fire services within the community or contract these services from a near-by community.

INAC provided \$27 million between 2008-2009 to 2014-2015 for fire prevention services. When the funding was split across 634 First Nation communities across Canada, each community received \$42,655 annually to maintain all aspects of fire prevention services.

INAC's operation and maintenance funding for fire protection training is based on community population, zone index (remote) and a "factor" of 50% of the net funding calculated. Therefore, communities with smaller populations are put at a disadvantage when attempting to allocate adequate funds for fire protection training. Additionally, the factor of 50% is grossly insufficient for any community attempting to provide fire protection training to volunteers and community members.

3.3 The Federal Response: First Nations Fire Protection Strategy

The Government of Canada has expressed the need to provide better fire protection for First Nation communities, reduce fire losses, and extend the life cycle of community infrastructure assets. Working in collaboration with regional First Nation organizations, the First Nations Fire Protection Strategy (2010-2015) was developed in 2010 to focus on fire protection in on-reserve communities.

The strategy outlined goals, priorities and activities for the short-term (1-2 years), medium-term (3-4 years) and long-term (5 years and beyond). Initial emphasis was on activities to generate the greatest impact in the shortest amount of time, such as fire protection education and awareness, fire safety inspections, and insurance of assets.

Mid-term and longer-term activities considered options to address the regulatory gap governing fire protection on-reserve. Further, the strategy focused on appropriate means of fire protection in light of such factors as community size and remoteness.

It also emphasizes a risk based approach, starting with a gap analysis in the short-term to identify communities at greatest risk, which will serve to guide resource investments and maximize results.

Goals of the First Nations Fire Protection Strategy:

1. Through awareness campaigns, reduce fire-related deaths, injuries, and infrastructure damage to levels comparable to those in the rest of Canada.
2. Develop mechanisms to support the provision of fire protection services in all First Nation communities that are effective and meet the standard enjoyed by comparable communities in the rest of Canada.
3. By referencing/adapting existing federal and provincial guidelines, establish mandatory standards for fire safety, fire equipment maintenance and inspections that:
 - apply to all First Nations in Canada.
 - are as stringent as any applied in comparable communities off-reserve; and
 - are routinely monitored and enforced through a compliance mechanism.
4. Ensure coordinated and continued commitment to fire protection in First Nation communities and the elimination of gaps in inspections, equipment maintenance and fire safety measures.

Priorities of the First Nations Fire Protection Strategy:

Short-term

- Conduct a gap analysis by reviewing current funding mechanisms and governance structures.
- Explore the creation of a fire chief role.
- Enhance fire safety education in First Nation communities.

- Improve fire loss data collection and integrity to identify communities at risk.
- Strengthen fire safety inspections and reporting.
- Examine the issue of insurance on-reserve.
- Encourage the recruitment and retention of firefighters.
- Develop systems to share information and best practices among regions.
- Promote innovative fire prevention technologies and initiatives.
- Integrate fire protection into emergency response planning.
- Promote First Nation firefighter associations for every region.
- Conduct a regional review of existing fire protection regulations/standards.

Medium-term

- Complete an analysis of fire protection capacity.
- Consider options for improving fire protection training.
- Further enhance fire loss data collection and integrity.
- Link fire protection to community planning.
- Revise the Levels of Service Standard for fire protection services.
- Develop a plan of action to address the regulatory gap governing fire protection on-reserve.

Long-term

- Address the regulatory gap governing fire protection on-reserve.
- Evaluate and report on effectiveness of strategy.
- Assess and determine any future action.

In 2016, the federal government released the Joint First Nations Fire Protection Strategy which built upon the 2010 strategy. The five-year strategy would work to promote initiatives that focus on fire prevention within First Nation communities on-reserve, which will reduce the risk of fire-related death and loss of infrastructure due to fires. The driving force behind this strategy was minimizing the risk of fire through knowledge and awareness of fire safety.

This strategy is outlined in four pillars:

1. Partnership for First Nations Fire Protection
2. Fire Prevention Education
3. Community Standards
4. Fire Service Operational Standards

Pillar One: INAC proposes ongoing collaboration with First Nation and First Nation organizations to improve infrastructure on reserve. Priority areas are identified as collaboration to prevent fires with a proactive measure.

Pillar Two: Introducing fire prevention programs in First Nation communities to help reduce fire damages and deaths. By strengthening fire safety and awareness across communities, an effective fire protection strategy will be established.

Pillar Three: There is a focus on promoting fire protection standards for communities across the country. Look into development of fire and building codes compliance for First Nation communities.

Pillar Four: A focus on fire prevention in the form of capacity development, code compliance and partnerships.

3.4 Tiered Funding

The current approach by INAC Level of Service Standards - Fire Protection Services - Capital Facilities and Maintenance Program is a continuum of support for First Nation communities that is built on a tired foundation of investment for fire protection.

This approach is hindering the ability for communities to gain the maximum level of funding, which will result in unnecessary damage and lives lost. There are three tiers of funding with the max amount being achieved at the third tier. Once one tier is met the community will be eligible to gain access to funding at the next tier.

1. Tier 1 focuses on fire prevention and educational programming.
2. Tier 2 focuses on capacity development and training. Funding provided for communities is population based, meaning larger communities will receive more funding than ones with a smaller population.
3. Tier 3 focuses on capital investments. Tier 3 provides funding for fire protection infrastructure or equipment.

The amount of time it will take communities to reach each level of funding can vary dramatically. INAC is presenting a formula for successful fire prevention services within a community, but is not providing enough resources to allow communities to benefit.

Funding should be provided to support human capital, rather than capital investments. Community members are often not trained on how to work equipment, making any resources in the community unusable. By supporting human capital communities will become more self-sufficient and will be able to act faster when disaster strikes.

3.5 Gaps in Federal Policy

The current federal responses to fire prevention have not been adequately presented to First Nation communities and it is unidentified whether or not all communities are aware of what has been implemented.

INAC's policies on fire safety and prevention is currently a one-size-fits-all approach. Fire prevention strategies launched by INAC, such as the Joint First Nation Fire Protection Strategy and the Level of Service Standards – Fire Protection Services, for First Nation communities were produced with lack of input from a variety of First Nation organizations.

As a result, policy does not accurately represent the reality of all First Nation communities across the country. These strategies were conducted through consultation through groups located in one geographic location. The policies may be geared to an already successful model, but it does not represent the differences between rural and remote communities.

The living conditions of those in rural communities largely varies from those who live closer to urban centres. Northern communities face barriers which need to be addressed when formulating policy. Increased consultation with northern First Nation communities is a vital step in creating a fire safety strategy that is unique to NAN territory.

Infrastructure in each community differs due to its location. A community may have access to a fire truck but no building to store it in. If there is a building to store equipment in, it may not be heated. If there are fire hydrants in a community they may not be connected to the water station.

In the 2016, Pikangikum First Nation house fire the sole fire truck in the community did not have water in it when the call came in. The community only has one fire fighter, and he faced a challenging race to the fire, which ultimately saw the terrible loss of nine lives.

3.6 Federal Commitments

In May 2017, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Minister Carolyn Bennett committed to the creation of a First Nation Fire Marshal and the improvement of tracking fire data on-reserve. This commitment came after Budget 2017 made no mention of funding designated for fire protection in First Nation communities.

NAN is not aware of any progress made on these issues since the Minister's commitments.

4.0 New Approach to Fire Safety

4.1 Need for NAN-wide Approach

NAN called for a new approach to First Nation fire protection and prevention following a tragic house fire that has claimed a life in Fort Severn First Nation in April 2014. It was the fifth fatality in a house fire in a NAN community in weeks.

The fire came weeks after a February house fire claimed the lives of four people in Mishkeegogamang First Nation. A State of Emergency was declared as the aftershock of that fire devastated the community and prompted calls for a NAN-wide approach to fire safety.

4.2 NAN's Plan: Amber's Fire Safety Campaign

Endorsed by Chiefs-in-Assembly and mandated by resolution, NAN launched Amber's Fire Safety Campaign² in May 2016 to increase fire safety and help prevent tragic house fires that that have devastated our communities and claimed far too many lives.

Amber's Fire Safety Campaign is named in memory Amber Strang, an infant just five months old and the youngest victim of the March 29, 2016 house fire in Pikangikum First Nation that claimed nine lives, including three generations of her family.

The campaign logo was designed by Caiden Gagnon, an elementary student from Johnny Therriault School in Aroland First Nation, winner of a NAN-wide logo contest.

The first step in the campaign was to provide every home in NAN territory a smoke detector within one year, which is well underway. Long-term goals include:

- providing residential fire extinguishers to homes in all NAN First Nations;
- increasing fire safety awareness and education, including support for certification in wood burning systems and fire prevention services; and
- developing comprehensive plan for fire protection including fire-fighting equipment, services and infrastructure including water distribution systems and fire hydrants.

NAN has established the Amber's Fire Safety Campaign Working Group, comprised of representatives' from First Nation and municipal firefighting services and other agencies including the Fire Marshal of Ontario.

Now in its second year, NAN continues to advance the campaign by working with Tribal Councils, various levels of government, municipal fire departments and other agencies to coordinate efforts to improve fire safety and fire-fighting services in all 49 of our First Nation communities.

Amber's Fire Safety Campaign includes a 10-point Action Plan detailing responsibilities, timelines and estimated costs (attached). Action items:

1. INAC to consult with NAN First Nations regarding funding and legislation
2. Develop a Fire Protection Strategy for NAN communities
3. Establish a funding model based on identified needs
4. Build First Nation capacity to manage fire protection and prevention
5. Develop a regional First Nations fire protection authority
6. Implement a communications protocol for government fire policy and legislation
7. Establish long-term commitment for Amber's Fire Safety Campaign
8. Implement Wood Energy Technology Training for all NAN First Nations
9. Utilize partnerships with municipalities to conduct training initiatives
10. Build upon INAC's Be Fire Safe program and Amber's Fire Safety Campaign smoke detector initiatives

5.0 Recommendations

We are pleased to provide the following recommendations to the Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs to help improve fire safety and emergency management in NAN First Nations. We strongly urge the Government of Canada to:

1. Provide funding and resources for the implementation of the Amber's Fire Safety Action Plan (attached) for NAN First Nations.
2. Provide funding, resources and enforcement to ensure that all homes and infrastructure meet national building and fire codes, as per funding agreements.
3. Support and establish an Independent Fire Marshal Office for First Nation communities to assist First Nations communities with safety and prevention through by establishing fire safety standards and performing regular inspections.
4. Reinstate the tracking of fires on-reserve and create a detailed database of deaths, infrastructure loss and other fire-related incidents and response for use in analytics for the evaluation of fire protection and prevention measures and approaches.
5. Explore the development of a trilateral process between NAN and the governments of Canada and Ontario to review the provincial *Fire Prevention and Protection Act* (1997) in order to provide equitable fire prevention services and protection under the rule of law.

6.0 Appendix

¹ Coroners Verdict Explanation-Jury Recommendations: Goodwin-Wesley Inquest, 2009

² NAN Amber's Fire Safety Campaign: 2017 Update Report

Respectfully submitted this 5th Day of December 2017.