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March 24, 2020

Dear Dene Tha' Citizens

COVID 19 Emergency Preparedness Plan

We are facing a new and unknown sickness, and we do not know how long this will be affecting our lives. This disease is named COVID-19. Many of you may have heard this sickness started around December 2019 and has since been spread throughout the world. It is continuing to infect people everywhere including Alberta and across Canada. The World Health Organization declared that this sickness is now a Pandemic. Pandemic means the sickness has spread all over the world. The virus infection was reported as near as Grande Prairie this past week and it will continue to spread. Keep checking daily news reports to be aware of the spread so you can continue to prepare and protect yourself and family. The new disease (sickness) is causing a lot of concerns and worries as it is continuing to spread and if people are not taking safety precautions proactively, the pandemic COVID-19 virus, will come into our communities.

As the Chief and Council, we have and are continuing to work with the senior Management team and staff to come up with a plan to follow to be ready to help to the best of our abilities and available resources to help our nation members be aware of the dangers and to learn ways to reduce the chances of getting infected. We need to do everything based on reality and not stay away from creating unrealistic expectations. One of the most important actions you can do, together with your family, is to know what you can do to help each other to reduce the chance of the spread of the sickness into your home and the community. Take this sickness outbreak seriously, as it is a matter of life and death for the more vulnerable members in our families. Be proactive to keep your family at home and organize yourselves to keep alert and stay safe. Work hard to change your daily habits, and limit or find ways to stay in touch with each other. Use telephone, FaceTime, Skype and other technology to check on each other. We are being told that the spread of the sickness may last several months; and may even have a second wave during next Fall and Winter season.

The changes you are seeing and hear about daily are new and will get us upset and continue to create much worry. The things we have gotten used to are being interrupted as in school closures, travel restrictions, and potential for food and supply shortages. It cannot be said enough that it is very important for everyone to know ways they can help each other by listening to what the health professionals are saying to protect yourself and family members,

especially children, elders, and persons with existing health conditions such as heart conditions, high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma and other respiratory (lung conditions).

You will hear this every day on the news, from health care professionals, our health centres and administration that the priority for everyone is to keep focused on health and safety, and not to let our guard down. The DTFN Council has approved the Emergency Management Plan (EMP) as part of the Nation's emergency preparedness response to guide us get through the COVID 19 health emergency crisis. On behalf of the Council, my gratitude goes out to our Management Team, the North Peace Tribal Council office, and the Town of High Level for their input in gathering information and ideas for the response planning during the past week. We are also thankful to all the Nation's staff for their cooperation to support Management Team and the EMP team during the implementation phase and throughout the COVID 19 Pandemic health crisis time.

The biggest part of the plan is to convince everyone to take the sickness very seriously and start immediately to begin safety practices all day long of every day that COVID is alive. If the viral sickness is here our daily decision is about life and death situations.

The Health Centres and the Tribal Administration will be handing out information about the COVID-19 Pandemic to DTFN citizens members and residents containing guidelines to remind you, and which will not be limited to the following:

- Keep your homes clean and practice personal hygiene daily
- Do not allow visitors into your home
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds each time (This is the most effective way to reduce the risk of infection).
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue, or your sleeve
- Do not shake hands, and keep 2 meters (or 6 feet) between yourself and others
- Resist the urge to touch your face
- Carry a hand sanitizer with you whenever you're out in public areas, so you can use it when soap is not available.
- Essential services public buildings in the communities must be cleaned and disinfected daily. Each place must have hand sanitizers or wipes or a place to wash hands with soap.
- Convenience Stores in the communities must install **plexiglass barriers** at the checkout counters to keep the staff and customers separate from each other. The stores and gas bars are essential services and to remain open all Health Canada and Alberta Health Services protocols shall be adhered to. Contravention of this rule may result in business closure in the interest of the safety of the community Residents.

- Community Monitoring stations are being set up to monitor traffic and people movement, in and out of: Chateh, Meander, and Bushe. The intent is to stop non-residents who are not providing essential services from coming into the communities. Essential services companies & personnel are allowed in and must follow COVID 19 safety protocol. <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/journey/covid-19/Pages/COVID-Self-Assessment.aspx>

The Chief & Council and Management Team have worked hard to capture as much relevant information within our collective abilities to develop the information packages for your guidance. Use only credible information from Health Canada, First Nation Inuit Health Branch, and Alberta Health Services to plan for your personal and family's safety to reduce the chances getting infected by COVID-19 sickness. We are all in this together...And if we all do our part to stay safe – we will reduce the impact and get through the COVID crisis.

This letter and other information packages will be posted on our website, and social media. Our community radio stations will be back in operation soon. Once the radio stations have been tested and successfully back in operation, announcements will be made to give you updates as new developments come out about the spread of COVID-19 virus.

We wish everyone the strength to get through these challenging times. God bless everyone and keep us well.

Sincerely,

Per: DTFN Council



Chief James Ahnassay