



MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL
RALLIEMENT NATIONAL DES MÉTIS

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Métis Abandoned in H1N1 Flu Pandemic Planning

Federal Health Minister refuses to acknowledge increased risk in Métis communities

Ottawa, ON -- Métis National Council (MNC) Minister for Health David Chartrand is warning of potential disaster in Métis communities from H1N1 virus outbreaks this fall. While Métis Nation citizens share an equal risk as First Nations and Inuit, there is no specific pandemic plan to protect over 300,000 Métis Nation citizens from this possibly deadly virus.

“The Federal Government has acknowledged First Nations and Inuit are more vulnerable to the H1N1 virus, and has responded by working collaboratively with First Nation and Inuit governments to develop specific pandemic plans factoring in their unique needs,” said Chartrand. “Even though Métis communities face the same conditions and health threats as other Aboriginal peoples in this country, Federal Health Minister Leona Aglukkaq refuses to even discuss a Métis specific pandemic plan.”

“There now is evidence indicative of both poor Métis health status and health access disparities which may increase Métis risk in an H1N1 flu pandemic,” said Dr. Judith Bartlett from the Manitoba Métis Federation.

David Chartrand raised the Métis Nation concerns with Minister Aglukkaq over a month ago, in an August 13, 2009 letter calling for cooperation between Health Canada, Métis governments and provincial health authorities in developing a preemptive plan to help Métis deal with H1N1. Minister Aglukkaq has not yet responded.

Chartrand raised the issue again during a conference call between Health Minister Aglukkaq and the National Aboriginal Organizations in advance of the annual meeting of Federal, Provincial and Territorial Health Ministers being held later this week in Winnipeg, MB. Once again the Minister refused to discuss a Métis specific plan.

“With a potential second wave of H1N1 possible within the next few weeks, we need immediate action,” said Chartrand. “Métis Nation citizens need some assurances from the Minister and Health Canada that adequate health services will be available, including sufficient amounts of easily accessible vaccine, in their communities.”

For more information contact Greg Taylor, MNC Communications, at (613) 296-9263 or gregt@metisnation.ca.

The MNC represents the Métis Nation in Canada at the national and international level. The Métis Nation's homeland includes the 3 Prairie Provinces and extends into Ontario, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories and the northern United States. There are approximately 350,000 – 400,000 Métis Nation citizens in Canada, roughly a quarter of all Aboriginal peoples in the country.