



Community Notice

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For Immediate Release

PAGC Chiefs briefed on landmark court ruling affirming Canada's legal duties on housing

(Pre-Confederation, Treaty 5, 6, 8 & 10) Prince Albert, SASK. – A recent Federal Court ruling confirming that Canada has enforceable legal duties to provide adequate housing and safe drinking water on reserve was the focus of discussion as Chiefs with the Prince Albert Grand Council gathered for their quarterly Chiefs meeting.

In a decision released in December, the Federal Court ruled in cases involving Shamattawa First Nation and St. Theresa Point First Nation in northern Manitoba that Canada's long-term underfunding of housing and essential services can breach Charter rights and fiduciary obligations owed to First Nations. Legal experts have described the ruling as a watershed moment in holding Canada legally accountable for on-reserve living conditions.

Chiefs received a legal update on the decision and its potential implications for First Nations, particularly in northern and remote regions.

“This wasn't an abstract legal discussion — this is about the lived reality in our communities,” said Grand Chief Brian Hardlotte. “Our Chiefs see the overcrowding, the mold, the families doubled and tripled up in homes. The Court is finally saying what we've known all along: Canada has a legal duty here.”

The ruling confirms that housing and drinking water on reserve are legal responsibilities that can be enforced through the courts, rather than discretionary policy decisions. While the case involved two Manitoba First Nations, the findings have broader national implications.

Vice Chief Joseph Tsannie said the decision reflects years of work to understand how federal funding decisions have contributed to current conditions in First Nations communities.

“In terms of not adequately funding our First Nations, we wanted to find out what decisions led to the outcomes we're currently facing in all of our communities,” said Vice



Chief Tsannie. “When the opportunity came to join Ontario First Nations in their legal action, our Nations stepped forward to be part of that class action.”

Vice Chief Christopher Jobb said PAGC has the data, staff and technical capacity to support the next stages of the work, pointing to extensive information gathered by PAGC’s housing department.

“Frank is here, our housing director, and Derwin has already provided information on behalf of our First Nations,” said Vice Chief Jobb, referring to Frank Bighead. “We have a huge database and a lot of information on our communities and their needs. In some cases, we’re seeing roughly 15 people living in a single house. Those are the realities we have to consider — the dynamics of families and the pressure that puts on households.”

Vice Chief Jobb said inadequate housing continues to affect the overall health and well-being of First Nations.

“Our Nations can’t get healthy without adequate housing,” he said. “It’s not just about having a roof over your head. It’s about dignity, health and the ability for people to live well. We are ready to take this further, and we have the people and staff to support the legal work if it’s needed.”

Many PAGC First Nations continue to face housing shortages, overcrowding, aging infrastructure and health impacts linked to unsafe living conditions. Chiefs discussed how these challenges affect health outcomes, education, child welfare and family stability.

“You can’t separate housing from health, or housing from family well-being,” said Grand Chief Hardlotte. “When homes are unsafe or overcrowded, the ripple effects hit every part of community life.”

Canada has indicated it may appeal the decision. PAGC leadership said Chiefs emphasized that further delays would not address conditions on the ground.

“Our people have waited long enough,” said Grand Chief Hardlotte. “Appeals don’t change the reality on the ground. What’s needed now is action — real investment, longterm solutions and accountability.”

PAGC said it will continue to update member Nations as the legal process unfolds and will press the federal government to act without delay.