



NETMIZAAGGAMIG NISHNAABEG

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Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg First Nation declares state of emergency

First Nations community seeks urgent relief from policing and mental health crisis

Queen's Park, November 19, 2024 – Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg Chief, Council, and Leadership have declared a State of Emergency with a goal of protecting their people from a crisis in violence, organized crime, addiction, and mental health.

Gathered at Queen's Park, the message from the northern Ontario First Nation was simple: that the community demands the basic safety, security, and access to services that other communities across Ontario expect and receive.

"We have reached a crisis in Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg," said Louis Kwissiwa, Chief of Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg. "A series of violent incidents, inhumane delays in emergency response, and the unchecked presence of organized crime have left our citizens feeling scared, abandoned, and unsafe – even in their own homes. This is not an isolated or temporary situation. It is becoming the new normal."

This decision was reached by the community as a last resort after the following incidents:

- A young man was held at gunpoint and beaten within the community, with a call for help taking four hours to receive a response.
- Another individual was stabbed multiple times, with the suspect roaming freely before being arrested.
- A home invasion involving armed offenders resulted in two offenders being at large in the community for a week, with the police insisting that there was no danger for the community.

These incidents are part of a wider, systemic failure of the Ontario and Canadian governments to keep First Nations communities safe.

"The Ontario government has shown a systemic pattern of negligence toward safety in First Nations. In Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg, lives are being threatened and lost due to unmet policing needs," said NDP Deputy Leader and critic for Indigenous and Treaty Relations Sol Mamakwa. "I urge the Government to implement the solutions put forth by Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg with the urgency this requires."

Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg has greatly strained its community resources to address this crisis internally, including the installation of security cameras, licence plate readers, and retaining external emergency security services, incurring \$5 million in debt. But the community is stretched beyond its capacity.

Drug trafficking by gangs has increased rates of addiction, overdoses, sex trafficking and violent crime. Suicide rates are rising and substance use issues are worsening, with the nearest detox beds over four hours away and long wait lists for those who can make it to Thunder Bay or Sault Ste. Marie. In order to save lives and restore peace and security, Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg is calling for:

- **Accountable Policing and Justice:** Consistent, timely enforcement of local laws to disrupt, and prevent organized crime, drug trafficking and violence.



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- **Adequate Funding for Safety and Mental Health Services:** To increase critical security and wellness and improve mental health outcomes for our community. This includes investment in local detox, treatment, and aftercare services.
- **Equitable Services:** Immediate action to provide Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg with the same level of support that other Ontarians demand and expect.

“The time for discussions and promises is over – we need action now,” said Joe Moses, CEO of Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg. “I have listened to this Premier, and to Ontario legislators, speak about protecting the public, from violence, from addictions, from gangs and guns. If this message is intended to apply to all Ontarians, including to our community in Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg, they will listen to the needs of our community.”

About Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg

The Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg (Pic Mobert First Nation # 195) is an Ojibwe First Nation with two reserves which lie off Highway 17 approximately 55 km east of Marathon, Ontario, along the eastern shores of White Lake, within the Superior Robinson Treaty area. Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg consists of approximately 1,010 members and between 350 and 400 of the First Nation’s population, live on-reserve at Pic Mobert South and Pic Mobert North. The Canadian Pacific Railway runs adjacent to the community.

Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg sits in the middle of an Northern Ontario economic boom because of the mining and forestry projects currently taking place in and around the traditional territory of Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg.

Netmizaaggamig Nishnaabeg is a member of both the [Anishinabek Nation \(Union of Ontario Indians\)](#) and the [Nokiiwin Tribal Council](#). The community is governed by a [Chi-Naaknigewin \(Community Constitution\)](#) approved on June 21, 2016. The Nation is currently led by Chief Louis Kwissiwa.

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