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# **Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs**

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**EVIDENCE**

**Tuesday, November 21, 2017**

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**Chair**

**The Honourable MaryAnn Mihychuk**



## Standing Committee on Indigenous and Northern Affairs

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• (1135)

[English]

**The Chair (Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Kildonan—St. Paul, Lib.)):** Welcome, everyone. We're having our 84th meeting of the indigenous and northern affairs committee. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are studying the fire safety and emergency management systems in indigenous communities.

First, I'd like to recognize that we're on the unceded territory of the Algonquin people. It's important for us to start to recognize that as Canada is moving through a period of reconciliation.

Welcome to our committee. Unfortunately, we've cut your time a bit. If it's okay with the committee, we're going to do seven minutes for each political party. Does that seem to work? That will take us a bit past 12 o'clock, but it will give everybody an opportunity.

You'll have 10 minutes to present and then we'll go into the round of questioning. I'll give you a signal when we're getting close to the end.

**Mr. Jean-Philippe Tizi (Chief, Domestic Operations, National Office, Canadian Red Cross):** Madam Chair, and members of the committee, thanks so much for the invitation to speak with you today.

My name is Jean-Philippe Tizi. I'm the chief of Canadian operations with the Canadian Red Cross. I'm joined today by Bill Mintram, senior manager of indigenous relations within the Canadian Red Cross.

We are very pleased to be with you today to share some of the observations and learnings from this year's wildfire season, which, as we know, has been extremely intense.

I would like to start by speaking briefly about the Canadian Red Cross collaboration with indigenous people and communities across the country. The Canadian Red Cross has a long history of working with indigenous people and communities. We have in fact worked with over 200 first nations across Canada so far. The community is at the centre of all Canadian Red Cross work and our goal is, obviously, to empower community leadership and enhance local capacity in a community-driven and community-led format. As an organization, we are committed to reconciliation, cultural safety, and collaboration with indigenous leadership, community organizations, and partners. We are also committed to a community-based service delivery that acknowledges first nations, Métis, and Inuit sovereignty, including nation-to-nation relationships.

Wildfire season 2017, as we know, was an extremely intense season that impacted so many people across the country, but mainly in the west. This summer we saw an active wildfire season with more than 5,300 fires that burned an area larger than 34,000 square kilometres. As part of this response, the Red Cross worked closely alongside indigenous people and communities, provincial governments, and INAC, of course, to assist more than 84,270 Canadians. This work included mobilizing more than 3,000 personal support people across more than 57 locations, including providing support to over 30 affected indigenous communities across Manitoba, Saskatchewan, of course, British Columbia, and also some in Alberta in a more limited fashion. Allow me to highlight some of the key actions of our work.

In Manitoba the Red Cross supported five indigenous communities. As you know, we were working with local leadership, INAC, and DND to coordinate the evacuation of more than 7,200 people. We arranged around 300 flights. We mobilized our troops and our logistic capacities to organize those flights. We have been supported as well by DND, who mobilized 12 flights as well just to complete the work. Also, as part of a five-year agreement with INAC we have been providing emergency supports to Manitoba first nations. Our team has worked with 12 first nations on emergency preparedness activities before this season and is now continuing. That's Manitoba in a very short fashion.

For Saskatchewan, in September 2017 extreme heat and dry weather resulted in the evacuation of 2,860 people. Evacuees were sent to Prince Albert and Saskatoon. We again provided emergency social services to all the evacuees on behalf of the provincial authorities for a total of 24 days. Again, it was a very long evacuation. This support included accommodation for 2,860 evacuees as well as the distribution of over 6,500 supplies, including cots, blankets, and comfort kits.

In B.C., obviously the largest of all the efforts this summer, there was a very long and intense response. We responded to hundreds of fires across the province and we assisted in B.C. more than 50,000 Canadians in the provision of accommodation, registration, emergency financial assistance, and individual support via casework. Of course, the work continues to be delivered now.

To date, our teams have conducted over 100 visits to the 24 indigenous communities that were impacted by this summer's wildfires. We are working closely with local leadership to understand how best we can support their population as they return to their new normal.

To date, these initiatives have included the following:

Around safety and well-being, obviously, we have learned a lot. Learning from other disasters has taught us the need to increase our support for mental and emotional well-being for people suffering from the psychosocial impact of evacuation.

The work continues to be done in collaboration with partners such as the B.C. health authorities, the First Nations Health Authority, INAC, and others to avoid duplication. This support extends for months and even years for those most vulnerable. We know it's a long run here.

In the area of community partnerships, community partnership grants are a vital aspect to helping communities recover. The projects are generated by local groups and reflect community priorities and culture. This support includes grants for schools, local governments, first nation bands, and community organizations to support responses and recovery. For example, we have recently approved a grant for first nation bands to assist with their costs to hunt outside their usual area as the animals have moved due to the fires. That's the typical type of support we could provide. Another example of community partnership requests from indigenous communities is for cultural gatherings and ceremonies which are, as we know, an important part of their recovery process.

Finally, there's support for small business. Another great example of how we are meeting the unique needs of indigenous communities is through our support for small business, including not-for-profit organizations, and of course, first nations in British Columbia on the inclusion of cultural livelihoods, recognizing the value in indigenous communities of individuals whose primary sources of income are cultural, artisanal, and through traditional hunting, trapping, and fishing. I'm very pleased to share that to date, over 2,900 applications have been received and over 2,100 of these applications have already been approved and processed in terms of assistance. The second phase of this program was just launched on November 20 and will continue to provide relief for small businesses and those living cultural livelihoods in a similar way to our support for individuals and families.

Obviously, lots of lessons have been learned. Again, it has been a very intense season, another one after Fort McMurray last year, and the Canadian Red Cross is obviously committed to work alongside communities before, during, and after disasters. It's a long run. We know one of the teams is still on the ground delivering services and will be there for a long time in B.C., in particular.

As part of this commitment, we are currently conducting consultations on our wildfire 2017 response with indigenous communities across all three provinces. Feedback from community members, local organizations, and other partners will help us continue to shape and adapt our programming.

We have three major recommendations. There are many others, but I just wanted to share those with you and with this committee at this time.

I will now turn to the first lesson and recommendation. The first response to any disaster is always local. It's through here; it's through international. We recommend investment in preparedness activities. We need to boost the investment in preparedness activities which would help enhance local capacity from within indigenous communities. We're doing well collectively. We believe that we can do much more again in terms of preparing communities and reducing risk and impact of future disasters.

Second, it is crucial to recognize that the diversity of indigenous communities and their individual languages, customs, cultures, and their community history, while ensuring culturally appropriate emergency preparedness tools, training, and activities. Adapting the approach to the very different nations, bands, communities across Canada is essential.

Finally, there is a need for increased collaboration with indigenous people and communities in both preparing and responding to emergencies of all kinds.

Madam Chair, and members of the committee, thank you very much for the opportunity to speak today. We'll be very pleased to respond to any questions you may have.

• (1140)

**The Chair:** Very good.

Questioning begins with MP Mike Bossio.

**Mr. Mike Bossio (Hastings—Lennox and Addington, Lib.):** Thank you, both, very much for being here today and providing this testimony. We have a tale of two cities, or in this case, a tale of two provinces. It was the best of times and it was the worst of times: the best of times being in B.C. as far as how things are rolled out with the evacuations, and unfortunately, by the looks of it, the worst of times in Manitoba, in the rollout there.

What would you say would be the key factors in the differences between what occurred in B.C. and what occurred in Manitoba?

**Mr. Jean-Philippe Tizi:** Thanks very much for the question. Bill will start to answer it.

**Mr. Bill Mintram (Senior Manager, Indigenous Relations, National Office, Canadian Red Cross):** In looking at the responses between provinces, because the scope and the dynamics are very different in relation to how we're providing services, we are doing our best to ensure that we're working with communities, working with the leadership, and striving to meet the needs of the people. The dynamic between Manitoba, as presented, and British Columbia... They are very different relationships in terms of working with community. Manitoba is working with the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs in a manner in which.... Sorry.

• (1145)

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** It's okay. Take your time.

Would you say that not having the provincial relationship and the preparedness is a vehicle in that relationship? Would you say that is one of the key factors in the difference between B.C., which is very engaged in preparedness, and Manitoba, which does not have that same kind of relationship?

**Mr. Jean-Philippe Tizi:** Just to complete here, yes, absolutely. In Manitoba we have a very solid agreement with INAC and an extremely solid relationship with the 64 bands, and we have been very active over the last three, four, five years. In fact, we've also started to be very active in the area of emergency preparedness. The ground is very solid. The collaboration is very much there. That's one factor.

The second factor is obviously the magnitude. We're talking about 7,200 people who were evacuated. It's not 56,000 people. In B.C. we have had a very good dialogue with B.C. authorities, and with first nations also. We haven't reached the same level of collective preparedness. That's what we are looking at now. We're looking ahead in terms of lessons learned. We know—and that's the message we convey everywhere—that we would rather have the dialogue about the role of the Red Cross, how we work collectively, and who is doing what before an event. That's basically what made a difference. Obviously, again, the magnitude was so different in the number of communities that were impacted. People were evacuated for two months. It was extremely long. It was another type of situation there.

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** Two of the recommendations that you spoke to were the diversity of indigenous communities and having an understanding of language, culture, and so on. Indigenous collaboration was the third one. How many members of the Red Cross who are engaged in this service are of indigenous origin? What percentage, would you say, of the employees actually have direct indigenous backgrounds that can be tied to these communities?

**Mr. Bill Mintram:** I don't have national numbers, but in Manitoba, around 27% of the staff are indigenous.

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** What about in B.C.?

**Mr. Jean-Philippe Tizi:** B.C. is lower. I don't have the exact number.

I'll mention two things, though. One is that there is an organizational commitment. Last year our board approved a position on reconciliation and made a strong commitment about increasing the number of volunteers and staff coming from first nation communities. That's in the mix; it's in the plan, and we're

progressing. In fact, in Manitoba it was even higher. In B.C., we have some team members. We also formed outreach teams with indigenous people.

We do recognize it's not enough, though. We're on the right track, but we need to amend the capacities, including capacities coming from first nation communities.

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** Of course, you spoke about preparedness and investing in preparedness. If the Red Cross is going to fulfill this service and this role in the future, how much of that preparedness is the responsibility of the Red Cross itself? What kind of training is going into Red Cross employees, in particular, indigenous individuals, to try to get that number from 26% to a much higher number? Is there an active program in place right now that is seeking to recruit and train indigenous people to fulfill these responsibilities?

**Mr. Jean-Philippe Tizi:** There are two ways to respond to that, if I may.

First of all, the responsibility to prepare is on the community. We're there to support and to offer the technical expertise. We have the know-how and the knowledge, which we can share, but first and foremost it's for the community to take this responsibility. That's the first response.

The second is that, as I've said, we have a plan of action that we will be activating in March to boost the number of people we train who are coming from indigenous communities.

• (1150)

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Bossio.

Questioning now moves to MP Arnold Viersen.

**Mr. Arnold Viersen (Peace River—Westlock, CPC):** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to our guests for being here today.

If you'll indulge me for a moment, I have a bit of committee business that I'd like to move into.

Madam Chair, two weeks ago, I put forward a notice of motion for the Privy Council to appear before this committee. I think everybody has had a chance to look at that motion since then. Since I've moved that motion, in fact, it appears that three more people have either resigned or been removed from the commission as well; I think it's three to five people. I think it's imperative that we vote on this motion and get the PCO here as soon as possible. I look forward to having a vote on that today.

**The Chair:** MP Anandasangaree.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough—Rouge Park, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

**An hon. member:** They don't care about the issue.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** It's non-debatable.

**The Chair:** There's a motion.

Do I need a seconder to close debate? No. All those in favour of closing debate? Those opposed?

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Chair:** I think there was some confusion. Can we call the vote on the motion? Are you prepared?

**An hon. member:** I would like a recorded vote.

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** Excuse me. I'd like to suspend and go in camera.

**The Chair:** Procedurally, we cannot go in camera.

**Mr. Mike Bossio:** Can you read the motion again, please?

**The Chair:** We have a motion on the floor that the debate be adjourned.

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** It failed.

**An hon. member:** My hand was up.

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** Yes, but it was three to four, so....

**The Chair:** I did do it fairly quickly. I didn't grab your attention that we have a vote, perhaps—

**Mr. William Amos (Pontiac, Lib.):** Excuse me. We were discussing the testimony and we didn't realize that there was even a vote.

**The Chair:** Okay. The recommendation is that we ensure that everybody understand that we have a vote. There's a motion on the floor that the debate be adjourned.

(Motion agreed to [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

**The Chair:** All right. The debate is adjourned.

MP Viersen.

**Mr. Arnold Viersen:** I'll hand the rest of my time over to MP McLeod. Thank you very much.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC):** Obviously, I'm very disappointed with the outcome on that really important issue.

My first comment is on something which I think would be good feedback.

I know that in British Columbia there was a system whereby people were given certain dollar amounts, which the Red Cross was responsible for administering. I would look forward to you perhaps, as you reflect on how that went.... I know that you were at the direction of the province in terms of how you did it and how much it was per household, etc., but I think there were challenges in terms of the uniqueness of a number of families living in one household and in terms of address issues.

When you do your reflection, if you could look at that particular issue in terms of how it might work better with first nations communities, that might be helpful. I appreciate that you were just the deliverer and not the policy person.

• (1155)

**Mr. Jean-Philippe Tizi:** No. Thanks very much for this question.

First, we have reached over 50,000 people, through the registration and through electronic funds transfer. This is amazing. Two years ago we were not able to do that. It was the same thing in Fort McMurray. More than 100,000 people in fact were reached through digital means. I will just put that on the table first. It's fascinating.

Second, yes, we know that not everyone can be reached through this digital fashion. It is about having the teams on the ground, outreach, in remote communities to deliver assistance in another fashion. We know it, and it is about continuing to build the capacity to reach a bigger number of communities more quickly.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** I'm sorry, but I think what I'm really focusing on is your recommendations to the province, because I know there were circumstances in which perhaps three families would live in one household, and they would be eligible for one reimbursement, because it was per household.

That's something I just put on the table. I think the Red Cross does fantastic work, but I would say that the ability of emergency support services in the community to be flexible and culturally sensitive.... I looked at the evacuation centres in British Columbia versus those in Manitoba. I know you spoke about being able to respond to the different cultural needs, but I saw a tremendous difference between those two places in terms of the actual ability to introduce ceremony, to have traditional foods, and to be welcoming.

I would like you to comment on that particular component. As I say, I have nothing but respect for the work that you do, but I think the ability to be flexible and respond to first nations communities was somewhat limited.

**Mr. Jean-Philippe Tizi:** I'll respond to the first part and I'll let Bill do the second.

On the first part of the question, on financial assistance, I would say two things here. Obviously, the criteria of eligibility and households were defined by the province.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Yes.

**Mr. Jean-Philippe Tizi:** If I may, I will just correct the information here. It's not by address; it's by household. So here that was, I think, solid enough. Where we faced some difficulties was mainly around the fact that some communities were on alert and some were under evacuation order, and sometimes there were different situations on either side of the street. It was very complicated.

The only thing we would say then, as a lesson, is can we get organized in advance with regard to eligibility criteria, on the way to manage evacuation, on the way to deliver assistance? Is \$600 enough for the first tranche? That's the kind of thing we need to go back to, and for us, it's about discussing ahead of time.

Bill, maybe you could complete the response.

**Mr. Bill Mintram:** In relation to serving and trying to meet the unique needs of indigenous communities, we also understood and continue to learn that the modality of electronic money transfer may not be the best choice, given people's access to banking. We do want to ensure that we have a variety of modalities so that we can meet the needs of people wherever they are, and can respond and work with leadership and communities in such a way that we can provide that vital support when it's needed. Within that, we as the Canadian Red Cross also offer a variety of different programs, as was mentioned, with community partnerships, support to small business, and other measures to provide additional supports that some of those policy measures provincially may not cover. Within that, we try to work with community and meet unique community needs.

I could go further, but I'll stop there.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** I'm sorry if I'm not being clear.

If I look at evacuation centres, and I look at where people were being supported, it's a very difficult job. In the evacuation centres in Kamloops, for example, they built in ceremony. They built in traditional foods. They built in some cultural practices. Those same things in Winnipeg, when we went to the evacuation centres there, seemed to be very lacking. When people wanted to bring in traditional foods, I think it was discouraged. Volunteers who might have been able to have some training in terms of registration, who knew their communities, were not encouraged. They were there. They were, quite frankly, often bored and would have been happy to help with some of the processes. So the ability to grab community members who wanted training to register and to respond to food issues.... I saw a real difference, and I'm wondering whether it was just something local that I was noticing or whether the framework for the response does not allow that flexibility that perhaps local government support services could provide.

• (1200)

**Mr. Jean-Philippe Tizi:** In B.C. we were not managing the congregate shelters. The municipalities were in charge. In Manitoba and Saskatchewan, we are. Maybe there are gaps there. We'll learn about that, because we are doing consultations right now. We need to see if there is this level of dissatisfaction, as you mentioned. We can take that and see how we need to continue to improve. That's definitely the commitment. I didn't hear that, but I take note and will certainly look at the results of those consultations and see if we have some improvement in the way we deliver services, and being culturally sensitive there.

**The Chair:** We've gone over our time, but if you'd like to respond to that question, we'll go to the next questioner after.

**Mr. Bill Mintram:** I will add that we do strive to be able to provide cultural accommodation within any of those structures where we are providing shelter, to try to accommodate aspects for cultural foods, ceremony, supporting individuals, such as residential school survivors, being able to ensure that we are trying to be as culturally sensitive as possible. That is a standard we try to attain within the services we are delivering, and it is part of our strategy and our framework moving forward.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Questioning now moves to MP Malcolmson. Welcome.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, NDP):** Thank you very much, Chair. Thank you to the witnesses.

Especially in what you are seeing on the ground, not so much the work the Red Cross is doing after the fact to support families and communities, but from your perspective, the infrastructure that we see available in a lot of indigenous communities.... I'm from British Columbia, and we were really worried about this during this summer. We've heard that some communities have no fire trucks, and some have no access to water. Following this terrible summer, would you be able to reflect on your observations about infrastructure priorities and what you're seeing in indigenous communities on reserve that is not mirrored by what we see in other communities in B.C.?

**Mr. Bill Mintram:** In relation to community supports, as the Canadian Red Cross, we have our community partnerships program, which allows for such things as firewood gathering, hunting, canning, practices that the community may have undertaken that the fires displaced, the opportunity to have proper reserves of food and those supports that come from that as they move into the winter. Within community partnerships, we will support a variety of opportunities that are community identified and community led.

In relation to direct infrastructure, that particular granting program doesn't cover buildings or those aspects of communities. However, in the work that we do, we are trying to ensure that we are working with the community to build back in an even better way, if possible. We work in partnership with all levels of government and with the community in a manner in which we can provide advocacy and support, but we don't deal directly with the infrastructure itself.

• (1205)

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** I would like your reflections on infrastructure which, had it been in place, might have made the fire less calamitous or might have made your job of after-fire care easier.

**Mr. Jean-Philippe Tizi:** Yes. Emergency preparedness and community preparedness go with some mitigation measures and sometimes—you talked of infrastructure—it's as easy as establishing evacuation plans. We know many communities have yet to be better prepared—let's put it this way—to evacuate. That's the kind of initiative we work on now with first nations communities in Manitoba. It makes a huge difference to have emergency plans and the protocol in place, the most vulnerable identified, and the protocol to assist those most vulnerable. All of this makes a huge difference in evacuation, and it's exactly the purpose of such an initiative like we have in Manitoba, supported by INAC.

Then obviously there is a wide range of issues: access to water, access to health services, a question of housing. That's a broader thing here, but disaster preparedness or sometimes the absence of disaster preparedness has a huge impact on the evacuation, and then there's the aftermath and the mental effects of the evacuation.

We know that every dollar spent on preparedness is around four dollars saved on the response, so that's again a big line for us in investing collectively in disaster prep. Back to your point then, that includes infrastructure sometimes, it's a huge difference.

**Ms. Sheila Malcolmson:** Some of the stories in B.C. this summer around evacuation were terrible. People were obviously frightened. In some cases, police said if people didn't evacuate, they would take their children. There were obvious flashbacks to very recent residential schools where government authority figures took children away.

Are there any reflections on the programs that go well, where you have indigenous leadership intimately involved in planning that evacuation in advance? Can you give us some examples of what that looks like, how it could be carried out in a more compassionate way? That would be at a very alarming time.

**Mr. Bill Mintram:** We recognize that when working with indigenous communities, we're working within understanding and being very sensitive to what sovereignty and nation-to-nation relationship mean. We're striving to work with the leadership in a collaborative way. Through whichever functions the Red Cross comes in to provide any types of services or supports, our goal is for that to be done in a way, where it's from being a part of community serving community, that there's a relationship and there's an ability to work collaboratively. If we weren't doing that, we would come up to many barriers that result.

As you have said, fairly negative stories have come about as a result of some of the actions that were taken and we can all learn from that to try to understand the best process, the best means of engagement, and how we can ensure that, from an indigenous lens and perspective, that aspect of relationship and collaboration is there and is set as a priority in that service delivery. From our perspective, it's continued learning and being very respectful of the process. I can't speak to the government or other avenues of what resulted in those circumstances as it wasn't directly Red Cross-related.

**The Chair:** That concludes our time. I want to thank you for presenting to us. We'll have a few more of these hearings. I encourage you to submit your brief, if you have one, or any information you think might be valuable to us. *Meegwetich*.

We'll suspend for a couple of minutes for the next panel to come in.

•(1210) \_\_\_\_\_ (Pause) \_\_\_\_\_

•(1215)

**The Chair:** Let's get going.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** Madam Chair, I'm wondering if this may be the right time to request that we have a committee meeting on November 28 for maybe an hour to dispense of issues.

**The Chair:** Can I ask for clarification? Is this for committee business?

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** Yes, I propose a planning meeting for committee business.

**The Chair:** Do you propose a planning meeting of the subcommittee or the whole committee?

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** It could be the whole committee. I think we're already meeting for an hour, so we may as well have the whole committee there.

**The Chair:** I'm told that we have a panel on November 28, but that there would be an hour available for committee business. MP Anandasangaree is asking that we allocate that hour for committee business.

Yes, Cathy.

**Mrs. Cathy McLeod:** Madam Chair, we just have one panel, but with how many witnesses?

**A voice:** [*Inaudible—Editor*]

**The Chair:** It seems that we have concurrence.

Welcome to our delegation. You probably heard that each presenter gets 10 minutes to present. There's only one presentation and then we'll go into a round of questions from the MPs at the table.

It's an honour to have you here, Grand Chief Daniels. You can start with your presentation.

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels (Grand Chief, Southern Chiefs' Organization Inc.):** Thank you.

I want to start off by recognizing we are on Algonquin unceded territory and also to thank our Creator for allowing us to be here today.

I want to thank all the members of the standing committee here, and my relatives: thank you for allowing me some time and sharing some time with me.

I'm going to stick to my notes, because it will keep the flow going. The relationship with Canada and indigenous peoples is one of the top priorities identified by the Prime Minister in his mandate letters to the minister. We are here today because we believe in reconciliation for the communities I represent. The rebuilding of our communities is at the heart of the reconciliation process, and effective management of emergencies and disasters in our communities is an important aspect of that.

Climate change and modern forest fire management practices are increasing the frequency of out of control fires near first nations communities. There are also changes in the scale and average duration of forest fires, particularly in the most remote areas. In 2017 alone, nearly 7,000 first nations citizens needed to be evacuated as a result of forest fires.

Last August, a forest fire started burning south of the Poplar River First Nation, a remote community on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, Manitoba, located 400 kilometres from Winnipeg and only accessible by boat or air. This community of 1,100 to 1,200 individuals has the shortest runway in Manitoba. The Poplar River First Nation declared a state of local emergency and evacuated on August 10, 2017.

In regard to the response and mitigation of last August's forest fire near the community, Chief Vera Mitchell stated, "It was quite a challenge to get everybody out of the community expediently due to our airstrip and airport. It took five days to get 700 people out, with about 50 flights of small aircraft which had about nine passengers, which is why the haste is needed to relocate and build an airstrip. Our airstrip is a clearing in the middle of the reserve that has limited capacity to handle aircraft. Only nine passengers can land on the runway. It's too short and is not to standard. There's no life flights for members and the freight planes are limited. There has been talk about an airstrip for 20 years and finally the province has allocated approval for the design stage, but of course it's pending a financial cost-sharing agreement with the feds. The jurisdiction of responsibility is what we always get caught in as first nations. If the last incident had been an emergency—a quick evacuation situation—it would have been a total disaster."

Last August, the forest fires were also burning northwest of the Wasagamack First Nation area of Island Lake, rapidly increasing in size and emitting high levels of smoke, which impacted three communities.



Wasagamack First Nation, a community of 1,160 inhabitants, was heavily impacted by smoke, creating a high level of risk to the community due to fire. The fire was threatening 26 structures, the band office, and a school, which led to a declared state of emergency on August 29, 2017 and a request for evacuation. Garden Hill First Nation, a community of 2,700 individuals, was heavily impacted by the smoke and required partial community evacuation of priority health individuals; a state of local emergency was declared on August 29, 2017. Meanwhile, St. Theresa Point, a community of 2,800 people, was heavily impacted by smoke. The band requested partial evacuation for priority health individuals on August 29, 2017. Power outages were experienced in three communities due to the high density of smoke in the air, which affected power lines.

First nations emergency management is problematic, and that's a well-documented reality. There is a consensus among the main authorities concerned that first nations are not well protected to face emergencies and disasters in order to limit the harm and cost to their communities. There is also a consensus around the need for a level of protection against disaster that is equitable and comparable to what is provided to other Manitobans.

The budget of the INAC emergency management program is not sufficient, and support has focused on response and recovery activities while the preparedness of the mitigation phase of the emergency management process is neglected. The mitigation phase is particularly neglected, and most first nations communities do not have the proper infrastructure to face different types of disasters.

• (1220)

The preparedness phase involves all the activities that ensure that when a disaster strikes, emergency managers will be able to provide the best possible response with first nation control. In the preparedness phase, emergency managers develop plans of action to manage and counter the risks, and take action to build necessary capacities required to implement the plans. Common preparedness measures include proper maintenance and training, emergency services, the development and exercise of emergency population warning methods, preparing shelters and evacuation plans, stock-piling inventory, maintaining disaster supplies and equipment, making communication plans, and establishing a chain of command.

First nations are in the best position to prepare for disasters and best know their own respective physical and social environment and their people. With the proper resources and the partnership agreements, first nations would be most effective to take charge of the disaster preparedness phase by themselves.

The response phase involves the mobilization of necessary emergency services and the first responders in the disaster area. It includes the first wave of core emergency services. That is why the response phase is better in the hands of the local community. They are there on site to immediately apply the emergency procedures and to start the deployment of operations. Effective response is critical to save lives and prevent further damage caused by the disaster of emergency situations. It's during the response phase of emergency management that the preparedness plans are put into action. In SCO communities, the response activities may include a damage assessment; the deployment of flood equipment, such as Tiger Dams; firefighting; and the shelter of victims.

First nations and their elected band council know their people. We know best who they can rely on for the execution of a response plan. We also know best what the sheltering needs are and what the possibilities are around citizens' medication, kids' schooling, business needs. These are just a few of the considerations that first nations band elected officials are in a better position to elevate than any other organization.

How am I for time? I have three minutes. Let me get into the last part here. I'll just skip over. I need to address the Red Cross really quickly.

In December 2013, AANDC announced that the government was transferring responsibility for long-term first nation evacuees from the Manitoba Association of Native Firefighters to the Canadian Red Cross. Since the Red Cross took over three years ago, first nations emergencies have represented 95% of activities in Manitoba. While we recognize and appreciate the good work of the Red Cross and the dedication of its staff and volunteers, we also see that the agency has been suffering some difficulties. This is mostly due to the fact that they are strangers to the community and the physical environment when operating on reserve.

The Red Cross is not always able to cover 24 hours due to the volunteer human-resource base. Some situations require immediate actions where communities can't wait for the Red Cross. For remote communities, the fact that the Red Cross is not on site can seriously compromise prompt and safe evacuations. The Red Cross is not always familiar with the safety plans for emergency procedures in the communities where they are mandated to provide services. Management does not always understand the first-hand needs of the communities. They do not know the communities. They are discovering and learning them as they go.

The Red Cross sometimes cannot easily identify where to find a supply for the disaster response. The agency is designed to take on so many big emergencies at once. Staff have limited knowledge and understanding of the local geography, the people, the situation, and the evacuation plans prepared by the communities. The agency doesn't always have the knowledge of the community and what its plans are. The staff get strangled by the local politics in the community. There's confusion of who is in charge in the community. There are also issues with the sheltering of our communities.

I'm going to leave it there. I think I'm going to let one of you two cover the rest because my time is up.

• (1225)

**The Chair:** You have one minute.

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** I'm going to leave it there. I'll let Jolene cover the rest. I don't think I can get through all of it.

**The Chair:** All right. We'll reset the clock. We have a bit of time. We want to ensure that everyone has a round of questions.

Go ahead.

**Ms. Jolene Mercer (Director of Operations, Southern Chiefs' Organization Inc.):** Okay.

The Southern Chiefs' Organization's vision for emergency management is that southern first nations in Manitoba would like to develop and be in control of their own emergency command centre, with proper operational needs-based funding. Our southern first nations would like the funding of this emergency command centre to be under the disaster management program of Public Safety, not INAC. This command centre would have the mandate of coordinating the action plan to address all current deficiencies when it comes to dealing with emergencies in first nations communities. This institution would enable us to get the flood and fire issues under control. It would be aligned with one of the main recommendations from the Auditor General of Canada on emergency preparedness.

In conclusion, we're here presenting to the indigenous affairs standing committee today because, as Grand Chief Daniels said, we believe in the reconciliation process. We recognize that there has been a history of wrongdoing in our relationship with Canada. There have been harms caused to our nations by the assimilation policy. They remain today, but times have changed. Legal and political contexts have evolved a lot. Because of that, we believe it's in the best economic and financial interests of the federal government to work with us to face the changing legal and international political contexts, including in regard to emergency management.

We lived under our own survival, policing, and legal systems. Now we're looking to rebuild our communities and to build those systems up again. For us, the rebuilding of our communities and our social and physical infrastructure is at the core of the reconciliation process. Again, emergency management is part of that process. In our discussions with Canada, we wish it to be understood that for whatever it is—education, health, housing, or emergency management—southern first nations in Manitoba require funding assistance based on needs and to control, manage, and design our own service and programming. We will continue to work on the reconciliation effort with Canada and to take part in reconciliation discussions and activities.

To this end, the main message our chiefs asked us to deliver to this committee today is this: one, provide us with the proper funding level to rebuild the physical and social infrastructures needed in our communities, including for emergency management; and two, give us the control to do so.

In conclusion, we really were the first Red Cross of this country when we welcomed newcomers to this country and we accommodated them. The proof is in the international Selkirk treaty.

• (1230)

**The Chair:** That's a good point.

We'll start the questioning with MP Sahid.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Thank you, Chair.

Thanks to our witnesses for coming today and for giving their important input on this study.

Grand Chief Daniels, you have always identified supporting indigenous youth as an important priority for your work, whether it means restoring families, developing school curricula, or providing mentorship programs for urban youth. Can you speak to the ways in which young people may be more valuable during times of emergency?

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** Well, there are several ways. Look at what happened in the Island Lake region. Many of the young people were helping to do the evacuation from Wasagamack. Because the fire approached the community so fast, there was no way any organization could have helped. The community had to do the evacuation itself. They ended up jumping on boats in the middle of the evening. Many of the young people were involved in making sure that all the children were part of that, and that no one was getting lost. They worked together to ensure that they were safe.

It was really quick. They didn't have any time. It was in the middle of the night. They all jumped on boats and they moved everybody out of the community. A lot of the young people were a part of that.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Do you prepare them for that? Is there some training provided to the youth? How do you make sure they are well prepared?

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** I think it's very limited in the communities because there's not a whole lot of resources there. It was more that they just knew the situation.

The communities know. They keep an eye on what's happening around them in the community. They're hunters. They're all out on the land. A lot of our young people are out on the land. They monitor these things. Once the fire approached, the young people were definitely a part of that. They were taking direction from the older ones. They were working together.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** What can we do better so that we make sure that the youth are well prepared to step up in this situation?

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** I think any of the innovations that have been advanced in terms of being able to monitor how fire.... I don't think people have a good understanding of how fire can change direction and move very quickly based on the environmental conditions. I think education is obviously one of them, but a lot of the young people are already volunteering and that needs to be pushed more.

The young people definitely require support in terms of training for emergency response. That goes not just for wildfires but it also goes for flooding. They're a part of that because they know their families. There would have to be a chain of communication and that already exists within the community.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Is there any way we can link them up with organizations like the Red Cross that provide help during fires? They could have some training sessions with them. Is that a possibility?

•(1235)

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** I think we could link them up to each other and have them support one another. I don't think we need to have people coming in from outside to tell them that this is how it needs to happen. They know what needs to happen and they just need to be resourced properly.

The only reason that the Manitoba Association of Native Firefighters really suffered was that they were taking on an issue that they didn't have the capacity to deal with. They were dealing with the 2011 floods. That's really what it came down to. The resources to respond to that were just too high and it was never addressed, but they still had to own the debt of the work that they did. That's when you'd see problems with MANF in terms of their accounting, all that kind of stuff. We see that across the board on every file.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** One of the most important things about an emergency management plan is the resettlement of the affected communities following the resolution of the emergency. Could you share with us the process that is followed as far as resettlement strategies in the wake of an emergency are concerned?

What sort of ongoing follow-up inspections and inquiries are made to ensure that communities are brought back to a pre-disaster living state or better than that?

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** What they do is they assess the community and what, whether it was a fire or a flood, the impact on the community was. They do an inventory of what would exist in the community and whether or not the community is prepared to go back to the community. That's part of the whole process, but the chief and the council plan with the emergency team, whoever that is, and then they look at timelines and the resources and all the different things that you are going to need in order to move all of the members back into that community, who is going to do it.

Also, you have to look at when you're removed from the community where you're going to stay. In this instance, we had thousands of our people at the RBC centre. They were on cots. Many of our elders were on cots. The province at the time, we believe, should have declared a state of emergency to open up hotels for our elders, so that our elders were not staying in big large dorms. It's things like that the community had very big concerns with in terms of having all of its young people in a big huge facility.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** We know that as of January 2017 INAC has emergency management agreements in place for a number of provinces and territories, including Alberta, Saskatchewan, P.E.I., Yukon, and the Northwest Territories. We have heard about how effective and robust they are.

Can you speak to what challenges have arisen in Manitoba with the attempts to put some formal agreements in place?

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** Who are you talking about? Robust—

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** The agreements that we have with other provinces to deal with the effective management of the.... We don't have an agreement with Manitoba.

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** We don't have one with Manitoba but we are working toward that and we're working toward that in

partnership with the municipalities as well. We're working with everybody on all sides. We've met with them and we're meeting with them again. What we're pushing for is to have a coordinated response across the whole region.

What we want to do also is push for a more volunteer-based approach as well through agreements with many of our treaty partners who are off reserve.

**Mrs. Salma Zahid:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** The questioning now moves to Kevin Waugh.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh (Saskatoon—Grasswood, CPC):** Welcome, all three of you.

Yes, Manitoba doesn't have an emergency agreement.

As you said, Chief Daniels, you're looking at a model in Manitoba. Are you looking outside of Manitoba at what works and what didn't work in Alberta, Saskatchewan, or wherever? What are the discussions around that? We can talk and talk. Every year you'll have either a flood or a fire, and we never learn from it. What would this look like, if you do change in Manitoba?

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** What would it look like?

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Yes. What would this policy look like?

We have emergency services provided in Alberta and Saskatchewan. You don't, really, in Manitoba. You don't have an agreement.

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** Yes.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** What would the agreement look like? You're obviously being consulted.

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** I think it would start off with a protocol between the existing agencies that are within the municipalities as well, and we'd want to communicate back and forth. All agencies that are part of an emergency response need to have a protocol for communication, first of all. There's no way for us to know what's happening down the river or on the other side of the fire front if we don't have those kinds of things. Also, there's the technical capacity to monitor from an elevated position for forest fires. Those kinds of things are also.... I'm not aware of where we have that ability, and so I know we have to partner with the province and other agencies that are already doing this work.

The IRTC is one of the tribal councils. They're the ones who are really pushing for the command centres. We've been supporting them, but I know they've reached out to one of the....

•(1240)

**Chief Lance Roulette:** Saskatchewan communities....

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** Yes. But we are looking at best practices, I can tell you that.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** The command centre is interesting. How much money does it take? Have you thought about the command centre? We've heard the fire marshal aspect of it. Now you've come here and said that you want a command centre. How much money are we talking about?

In terms of the control of it, this is something new. We have not heard this in our briefings with any first nation group that has come here. All of a sudden you've thrown in this command centre that would be regulated by Public Safety, which is a different organization. You know where I'm coming from on federal bureaucracy. All of a sudden you're bringing in another.... Give me your perspective of what this command centre would look like.

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** There are three of them. We support our communities and our tribal councils. That's our approach, from a political level.

What I'm saying here is that we need control of that, from a community perspective. We have to be able to respond in a way that's efficient and is going to actually be effective in terms of getting the communities to do it in a way that's going to work for them.

In terms of the price and the cost, these things were planned. Twenty years ago they were already talking about these. I don't know how much the cost has increased. I don't want to put a number on that. There are three of them, and there are a lot of different particular things that go into whatever the proposal is. I know it's on the table. What I'm saying is that we need that support in order to ensure that those things improve.

You could look at a whole lot of reasons for it being better to have it come from the community. The history has always been that things come from outside, that they know best outside, but that doesn't build the capacity of the community, because nobody likes to be told anything. They want to learn through their own process. The communities are all responsive to that.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** We just looked at your runway.

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** Which one?

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** The one you were talking about, Poplar River. You're not going to land a 747 on it; I'll tell you that.

We didn't go to Poplar River, but we were in Winnipeg talking to people who came from there. The frustration of the people there was at an all-time high. As you mentioned, there are five to a boat, or whatever. They're picking up seven or nine at a time on an airplane. This is an issue that has been boiling over for several decades. I want you to respond to that.

It's a remote area of Manitoba. I realize that.

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** Do you want me to talk about Poplar River specifically?

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Yes.

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** You have to get them an airstrip.

Imagine if what happened in Wasagamack happened in Poplar River, and you didn't have any time. If they hadn't had the boats, it would have been more of a catastrophe. The risk still exists, because the communities don't have....

The community of Pauingassi, which is a lot smaller, doesn't even have an airstrip. It's very isolated. In the same region, Little Grand Rapids doesn't even have a road to the airstrip. If they ever face the same kind of situation, these communities are going to be in a more dire circumstance than they were at Island Lake. At least in Island

Lake, they have a bigger lake. They have other communities in the region they can go to that can provide shelter to the community.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** I heard about the shelter issue in Winnipeg when we were there. In Saskatchewan, although we had our challenges, we made sure that in Prince Albert and Saskatoon those who needed to be were at least put up in hotels. You didn't have that in Manitoba. When we visited that centre, that was one of the sticking points.

The respect for elders or children was an issue in these places. Would you agree with that?

● (1245)

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** Oh, yes, and I think we heard it from the leadership back home, in terms of the response when they were in the shelters. There were a lot of different concerns. I mean, it went into the media. It was all over the place, in terms of the leaders from the Island Lake region and what they were saying.

**The Chair:** You have about 10 seconds left.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Go ahead, Chief Roulette.

**Mr. Garry McLean (Elder, Lake Manitoba First Nation):** I'm Elder McLean. My name is Garry McLean.

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Yes, that's right.

**Mr. Garry McLean:** [*Witness speaks in Saulteaux*]

That wasn't French. That was Saulteaux, Ojibway territory.

As elders, we're taught to respect all of you people here, because all of you are our brothers and our sisters. We respect that.

As you know, in Canada, we have roughly 220 isolated first nations communities in Canada. In Manitoba, we have 22. In our region, we have four. In the southeast, with 32 communities, four are isolated communities.

In those communities, the Manitoba firefighters association was set up to do brush fires in the early nineties. They were only funded to do brush fires. In Manitoba, when the flood in 1997 came, we weren't affected until two months after. Morris was affected in the spring. The water doesn't get to our communities until two months or three months after, so often we have time to prepare.

The problem that we have, of course, is with the region. I mean, emergency funding for the department of Indian affairs is very limited. It's very low in Canada, and not just in Manitoba but in Canada.

I think, as a committee, if you're going to make recommendations to the finance minister, those are the things you need to include. We have plans in place. We've presented some of those to the region, but the region is stuck with things too. As you know, there's roughly \$10 billion in Canada. Manitoba gets around \$1.6 billion to be spread out in 63 communities. That doesn't include new emergencies. That's the problem we have. With anything over \$500,000, you have to go to the Treasury Board, and that causes difficulty. The first nations are not allowed to come directly to the Treasury Board; we have to go through the region, and that's the problem.

*Meegwetch.*

**Mr. Kevin Waugh:** Thanks, Garry.

**The Chair:** All right, the questioning goes to MP Donnelly.

Welcome.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (Port Moody—Coquitlam, NDP):** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my first time subbing in at this committee, so thanks for having me.

Thank you, witnesses, for providing your testimony on this study on wildfires in first nations communities.

I want to first off say I'm sorry for any losses to those families in the communities you talked about, in terms of the impacts of fires this past summer.

Grand Chief, you gave a lot of background information. You mentioned the infrastructure that you're faced with in some of the communities, and the slow response and inadequate financing, and some of the problems. There was a presentation of two recommendations, looking at proper funding, and your wanting controls over implementing your plans.

Can we go back a step? You also referenced developing a protocol. Forgive my ignorance, but is there such a protocol that exists with your communities and the federal and provincial governments?

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** Yes. The firefighters do communicate among themselves throughout the province, so there is communication that's happening. What I'm trying to do is to push towards expanding that beyond just within our communities, to get more involved in the whole region, co-operation mainly, so that we can find efficiencies. That takes a commitment from leadership within municipalities to ensure that happens.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** I was going to ask you to expand on that. What would that look like? Is there a willingness from the federal department and governments to go with what you're saying or is it more of a barrier as a problem?

• (1250)

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** I don't know if we've actually gone down this path where we've had capital assets that are made available, that do not exist within first nations, where they'll respond in a timely fashion in a way that we need. We don't know who was involved in the monitoring of the fire in Wasagamack. How did that get up so quickly? Did we know the wind trajectory, all the different factors that go into assessing the level of risk?

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** We talk a lot about free, prior, and informed consent. What you're proposing in terms of establishing a protocol sounds like a very good opportunity for a longer term solution. How do we get at the systemic problems that you're identifying to this committee and a protocol for how we talk to each other government to government to government? It seems like that makes sense. Then we could get down into the specific plans and funding and timelines, etc.

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** It's definitely a delicate balance. There are a lot of people who are a part of that discussion. I see the value in partnership and working together. I think we could find a lot of efficiencies that we don't have identified right now. Just by

working together in that fashion you allow for more issues to be worked on.

There are lots of different things. With flooding, it has to do with some of the ditches within the municipality that are not cleared out. We need to deal with those kinds of things as well.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** In terms of amenities for firefighters and infrastructure, you mentioned that they're inadequate in some communities. Could you talk about the current infrastructure that exists and what's needed?

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** There's a huge lack of infrastructure. We've discussed among the communities how to manage evacuation in the future, trying to build from what we've seen. Some of the communities want to have more.... It needs to be taken at a higher level of concern. If you had a community or region the size of Island Lake evacuate anywhere in Manitoba, hotels would have been made available. We can look at any example for that. With 10,000 people moving out of a community, I'm pretty sure you wouldn't put them into the RBC centre.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** There doesn't seem to be a level that exists in terms of calling a state of emergency, in terms of how many people are affected.

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** That's what I'm trying to work for. I'm trying to have a threshold. It's on everything. We need to have a standard for measuring the honour of the crown. How do you establish that or how do we establish a genuine partnership? We have to have something that says this is where it is. We have to try to move in that direction.

**Mr. Fin Donnelly:** Could you talk about the funding needed? We're just talking about control and how to develop that control and involve first nation communities more in control. Your other recommendation was about proper funding. I think you mentioned earlier that you didn't have the numbers. Is there a way to find out how much financing is needed to properly fund emergency response, wildfires?

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** We work with our partners. That's what I've said. The IRTC right now is the one that is advancing it within our region. A lot of it is capacity within all the organizations. It's difficult to do something at a higher level, at a regional level. We build off of our partners. We work with the ones who are leading it. We try to build off of the best of our people. We try not to duplicate that.

When I say the IRTC is moving in this direction, I'm saying, yes, we support this, this needs to happen, but we want to be a part of expanding that to the entire region. That's our job, to ensure that takes place. We want to make sure that it happens within a time frame.

• (1255)

**The Chair:** You're done.

Questioning now goes to MP Anandasangaree.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you, panel, for joining us this afternoon.

We've heard quite a bit of testimony recommending an indigenous fire marshal. I'd like to get a sense of your thoughts on what kind of function they would have and what kind of consultation you have had with anyone relating to this so far.

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** I'm unsure of what.... I guess the fire marshal would be the one who makes the decision on how firefighters are preparing.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** The idea is, it's a broader mandate, so it will be a fire marshal for Canada, and just strictly....

**Mr. Garry McLean:** For the province?

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** It's for the country, and they would be focused strictly on indigenous communities. That's my understanding. I could be wrong and my colleagues can correct me here. But if you're unaware of it—

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** I'm not familiar with it.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** Okay, we'll move on.

I am very interested in your comment earlier that our indigenous people were the first Red Cross when the settlers came in.

In today's scenario, what are your top three frustrations with the Red Cross and the way the fires this summer have...?

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** The thing is, I don't want to really make it about the Red Cross and them. They do great work all over the world, unquestionably.

What has happened is that first nations have always been responsible for ourselves, for our laws, everything, everything that has to do with governance. For the last 150 years we have had people coming in there telling us that this is wrong, and there is a whole history there. I'm sure everyone here is aware.

What we want to do is re-establish and recognize that these things are in place already. We already have people who are out on the land and they know.... Communities have the ability, the capacity, to plan for themselves. No amount of money is going to make it more efficient. If a community has an action plan and the community has the resourcing to respond to emergencies, flying people in or trying to build that will never ever compare to the day-to-day interaction and communication within the community itself.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** Out of the communities you represent, how many have emergency plans right now?

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** I think all of them have some plan. They all have to have a plan and the tribal councils help as well within a region. We have four tribal councils within SCO and they help to provide that as well, so there are quite a few.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** Are those emergency plans based on some best practices, or is it strictly...?

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** I think a lot of the fire codes are the same. They're usually the same. I think all of our public buildings are usually pretty standard across the board. Obviously, because we haven't been resourced properly we don't have simple things. Our extinguishers or our fire alarms.... We've seen examples where the fire alarms weren't working in a community for whatever reason.

Sandy Bay was a terrible example where many people lost their lives in a house fire, and that has to do with underfunding in housing.

We're always looking for efficiencies on everything because we know there is always a scarcity of resources.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** One of the comments we've heard was with respect to implementing the fire code because I believe our building inspector, from the Bay of Quinte, had suggested that oftentimes it's the leadership within the community that actually is responsible for building the houses, but they're also responsible for zoning and building code enforcement. Often there is a conflict in terms of timing because there are often delays, and so on.

Have you experienced any issues with respect to the building code being implemented?

• (1300)

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** I haven't heard. I know there are some difficulties with that, because we don't have an organization that has really been able to keep people on task. I mean, our first nations are operating in a state of crisis in the community all the time. We have a history of social problems that have been created. There are not many jobs, and everything is socially funded. We have a huge amount of wealth all around us; meanwhile, the community has not benefited in any way. This has to do with trade barriers within the community. Everything is linked. That is why we are unable to deal with some of these things—because we are so preoccupied with all the other things we have to deal with day to day. What we try to do is endeavour to expand that so it's not being missed.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** I think we are past time. Are we, Madam Chair?

**The Chair:** The committee usually adjourns at one o'clock, but I wanted you to complete your comments.

**Mr. Gary Anandasangaree:** If you have anything else to say, we have about a minute.

**Grand Chief Jerry Daniels:** I just want to thank everyone for listening to me today. The building codes are something we push in the communities. Every community is autonomous, on its own. They are first nations, and they are the ones who sign treaties. We are in agreement that treaties don't make nations; nations sign treaties. That is the relationship. It is a partnership.

The whole vision was that we would proceed toward sustainable prosperity together and that we would respect the cultural and political integrity of each other's nations. That's what we are here to let you know. We are always willing to listen and build understanding among our partners and relatives.

*Meegwetch.*

**The Chair:** Thank you for coming to Ottawa and presenting. We appreciate that.

The meeting is adjourned.









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