



INDEPENDENT FIRST NATIONS ALLIANCE

SIOUX LOOKOUT OFFICE

P.O. Box 5010, 56-D Front Street, Sioux Lookout, ON P8T 1K6

Toll Free: 1-888-253-IFNA

Tel: (807) 737-1902 | Fax: (807) 737-3501

RESOLUTION 2026/05

IFNA Chiefs Call on Auditor General to Investigate Canadian Human Rights Commission, as Commission Continues to Slow-Walk Urgent Human Rights Complaint re. Indigenous Fire Safety

WHEREAS the member communities of Independent First Nations Alliance (IFNA) continue to experience an ongoing fire safety emergency, with loss of lives and severe injuries, including major fire-related tragedies in 2016 (nine people dead in a house fire in Pikangikum First Nation), 2019 (five dead in a house fire in Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug), and 2023 (three dead in a house fire in Pikangikum);

WHEREAS on March 23, 2026, a house fire in KI resulted in the death of the three-year-old grandson of Chief Donny Morris of KI, alongside severe injuries to two adults;

WHEREAS IFNA and KI warned the Commission that further fire-related fatalities were imminent if the complaint was not treated with urgency and advanced without delay;

WHEREAS the federal government's failure to address this urgent safety crisis has led to critically unsafe conditions, including inadequate housing and infrastructure, overcrowding, lack of smoke detectors and other fire prevention measures, a lack of fire departments and fire halls, inadequate firefighting equipment, and an ongoing pattern of severe, chronic underfunding of on-reserve fire safety services;

WHEREAS a First Nations person living on reserve is ten times more likely to die in a fire, and a First Nations child is eighty-six times more likely to die in a fire than a non-First Nations child (source: Indigenous Services Canada, *First Nations Fire Protection Strategy, 2023 to 2028*);

WHEREAS the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ("UNDRIP") provides that all Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination and to be free from discrimination;

WHEREAS Article 7 of UNDRIP provides that all Indigenous peoples have the right to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty, and security of the person;

WHEREAS Article 21 of UNDRIP affirms that Indigenous peoples have the right to the improvement of their economic and social conditions, including housing, sanitation, health, and social security;



WHEREAS Canada has incorporated UNDRIP into law through the *UNDRIP Act* (S.C. 2021, c. 14) (“*UNDA*”);

WHEREAS Indigenous Services Canada (“ISC”) is responsible for on-reserve fire safety, pursuant to the *First Nations Fire Protection Strategy, 2023 to 2028* (the “Fire Protection Strategy”);

WHEREAS ISC’s Fire Protection Strategy has failed to improve fire safety for all First Nations, and fire safety conditions are in fact worsening while ISC fails to act;

WHEREAS on August 29, 2025, IFNA, alongside member First Nation Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (“KI”) jointly filed a human rights complaint under the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (RSC, 1985, c. H-6) (“*CHRA*”), alleging systemic discrimination by ISC due to chronic underfunding of on-reserve fire services;

WHEREAS the Canadian Human Rights Commission (the “Commission”) is responsible for conducting a preliminary screening of all *CHRA* complaints prior to referral to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (the “Tribunal”);

WHEREAS the Commission has a mandate to “advance human rights in Canada by representing the public interest, identifying emerging issues and advocating for change that keeps pace with society so that Canada is inclusive, equitable and barrier-free” (source: *Commission Mandate*);

WHEREAS the *CHRA*, s. 48.9(1), requires that complaints be dealt with “as informally and expeditiously as the requirements of natural justice and the rules of procedure allow”;

WHEREAS the Commission has committed to prioritize “cases where the alleged discrimination is ongoing or severe” (source: Commission Website, “Discrimination Complaint Process”);

WHEREAS the fire safety crisis in IFNA-member communities is a life-threatening situation, characterized by the severe, ongoing threat of fire deaths and injuries;

WHEREAS on October 29, 2025, IFNA and KI wrote to the Commission, advising of a recent fire in KI and urging the Commission to expedite the Complaint, given the imminent threat of another fire death;

WHEREAS on October 31, 2025, the Commission responded in an unsigned email, indicating it had not yet assigned an “Intake Analyst” to conduct a review, and warning IFNA and KI not to follow-up with more requests for status updates, or else risk delays to the complaint;



WHEREAS the Commission’s unsigned e-mail contained offensive language suggesting the complaint would be delayed due to the First Nations’ requests for updates, and the author of that e-mail should be identified and apologize for their comments;

WHEREAS the Commission has not provided any updates regarding the status of this Complaint, or whether the Commission has even assigned an intake analyst to undertake the initial review;

WHEREAS under the *Auditor General Act*, R.S.C., 1985, c. A-17 (the “A.G. Act”), the Auditor General of Canada has the authority to audit, monitor, and report on the activities of any department of the federal government;

WHEREAS the Commission is defined as a “department” within the meaning of the *A.G. Act* and associated *Financial Administration Act* (R.S.C., 1985, c. F-11) (the “FAA”) (see *FAA*, Schedule I.1, Sections 2 and 3);

WHEREAS the Commission’s slow-walking of this ongoing, severe complaint represents a clear breach of its mandate to serve the public interest;

WHEREAS the Commission’s pattern of slow-walking urgent First Nations complaints can be seen in the *Caring Society* on-reserve child welfare case, in which the Commission took nineteen months to conduct its preliminary review (see: *First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada et al. v. Canada*, 2016 CHRT 2, para 6);

WHEREAS the Commission has a documented track record of delays of several years in the processing of complaints, with an average wait time of fifteen months according to the Commission’s own reporting (source: *Update on the Canadian Human Rights Commission’s anti-racism efforts*, p. 3);

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that IFNA calls upon the Auditor General of Canada to immediately launch an investigation into the failure of the Canadian Human Rights Commission to address this complaint in a timely matter; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that IFNA condemns the inaction of the Commission on this complaint, and further condemns its unsigned statement to the effect that this complaint could be delayed as a result of IFNA’s requests for updates, and demands to know the identity of the unnamed individual who sent the e-mail containing the offensive statement.

DATED THIS 25th DAY OF MARCH, 2026, IN TORONTO, ONTARIO.



INDEPENDENT FIRST NATIONS ALLIANCE

SIOUX LOOKOUT OFFICE

P.O. Box 5010, 56-D Front Street, Sioux Lookout, ON P8T 1K6

Toll Free: 1-888-253-IFNA

Tel: (807) 737-1902 | Fax: (807) 737-3501

Chief Lawrence Wanakamik
WHITESAND FIRST NATION

Chief Carla Duncan
MUSKRAT DAM FIRST NATION

Chief Clifford Bull
LAC SEUL FIRST NATION

Chief Donny Morris
KITCHENUHMAYKOOSIB INNINUWUG

Chief Paddy Peters
PIKANGIKUM FIRST NATION