

# Media Release

FSIN Communication Unit



## **FSIN Questions INAC on Commitment to Proper Housing**

**TUESDAY, October 5 2004** – FSIN First Vice Chief Morley Watson is concerned the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs is not committed to responsibly addressing the issue of vermiculite insulation used in homes on First Nations.

In April of this year, media reports indicated that Health Canada was issuing guidelines on how to protect citizens from the asbestos laced insulation vermiculite. This type of insulation would have been used in homes built on reserves from 1960 to 1990, the exact number of homes affected has yet to be determined.

This issue was brought to the attention of the media because the brand Zonolite of vermiculite insulation was used in a Manitoba First Nations home and the First Nations lady and her family were diagnosed with cancer. As of September 2004, four members of their family had been diagnosed with this rare cancer.

Vice Chief Watson stated, "INAC has been aware of this issue for some time. It was assured a review would be done and completed in August of this year. First Nations have received some information from this review but in the end it is up to the First Nations to deal with this situation. It makes me wonder how committed to addressing this issue INAC really is considering they are the ones who approved the building materials used in these homes."

Statistics through an INAC record check have confirmed that 276 housing units in 26 Saskatchewan First Nations communities constructed between 1960 – 1990 had Zonolite brand of vermiculite insulations used in the construction. This figure accounts for almost half of the units identified under the INAC record check across Canada where the total was 597.

However, there may be more units affected where construction records were not properly maintained. Therefore, it is encouraged that all First Nations communities contact the local INAC office, Tribal Council or appropriate authority to check all units constructed during the same period.

The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations has approached INAC to deal with the current situation and develop a plan of action and information process.

"Although INAC stresses partnership resolution can only be obtained with full and total input from the First Nations to correct this situation and immediately address others such as black mould, overcrowding and water quality which plague all First Nations not only in Saskatchewan but right across Canada. Only through First Nation involvement will we continue to survive as a nation of people and as equal partners in our own land." Vice Chief Watson concluded.

The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations represents 74 First Nations in Saskatchewan. The Federation is committed to honouring the Spirit and Intent of the Treaties as well as the promotion, protection and implementation of the Treaty promises that were made more than a century ago.

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