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Delays loom as Ottawa swamped by backlog of native compensation claims

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By: THE CANADIAN PRESS

OTTAWA - The federal government has hired more staff and is working overtime to clear a huge backlog of native compensation claims.

More than 71,000 people who attended Indian residential schools have applied for payments under a \$2-billion settlement program.

About 80,000 people are eligible to receive \$10,000 for the first year they went to the church-run schools, and \$3,000 for each subsequent year.

Average payments are expected to total about \$28,000, but a government spokesman couldn't say how long most people will have to wait.

Martin Rivard of Service Canada says 5,000 cheques have been mailed out since applications became available Sept. 19.

The government had hoped to mail out most cheques within four to six weeks of application but has received more claims faster than expected.

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