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AMC & FNFAO call on Minister Stefanson and Government to work with First Nations in taking the end of birth alerts a step further in preventing newborn apprehension

Treaty One Territory, Winnipeg, Manitoba - On Thursday, January 30, 2020, Minister Stefanson announced the Manitoba government will end the practice of birth alerts as of April 1, 2020 and will work with expecting mothers in developing meaningful birth plans.

According to the Child and Family Services manual, birth alerts apply to expectant mothers considered by Child and Family Services (CFS) agencies to be high risk in relation to the care they will provide for their newborn infant. Currently, the practice in Manitoba is to issue alerts to track and locate these high-risk expectant mothers.

Grand Chief Arlen Dumas stated, "Apprehending a child after birth is one of the most violent acts committed against a woman. It is a common practise that has been initiated through the health care system and CFS. In 2016, the AMC Executive Council of Chiefs passed a resolution that called on the provincial government to immediately end the practice of apprehending babies from hospitals. We have been a strong advocate when it comes to this issue as it is a human rights violation."

In September 2019, the British Columbia government announced that it will end the practice of birth alerts that allows hospitals and CFS agencies to flag mothers who deemed to be "at-risk".

"If a mother is given an additional \$80.00 per month on social assistance to help pay for diapers and formula, the outcome would outweigh the negative effects of having a child in the system. But if you apprehend a newborn from their mother and have a newborn in foster care for a year, it will cost \$46,000 on average," stated Cora Morgan, First Nations Family Advocate.

"Today, we call on Minister Stefanson and her government to work with First Nations and the AMC to take their plan to end birth alerts a step further in preventing newborn apprehension. Since the opening of the First Nations Family Advocate Office (FNFAO), we have been providing support to families when a birth alert is issued. We have experts that can help address this urgent issue," concluded Grand Chief Arlen Dumas.

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