
News Release

February 20, 2020

**MANITOBA GOVERNMENT AND ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA CHIEFS SIGN
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING ON NORTHERN AIRPORT AND FERRY
OPERATIONS**

Premier Brian Pallister and Grand Chief Arlen Dumas, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC), today signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to formalize discussions toward an agreement on the transfer of the province’s northern airports and marine operations to First Nations ownership and operation.

“The Manitoba government continues to support the creation of First Nations-led partnerships and ventures and this is the first formal step in developing a viable ownership model and sustainable business plan for a First Nations-led northern airports authority,” said Pallister. “Such an agreement would give First Nations independence in controlling the critical transportation they depend on daily and benefit northern economies. This is a critical step toward furthering true reconciliation in Manitoba.”

The province’s Northern Airports and Marine Operations (NAMO) has a network of 23 airports and five marine facilities. The network covers an area of Manitoba from Selkirk north to Sayisi Dene First Nation and from Brochet east to Shamattawa First Nation. The northern airports and ferry infrastructure provides a lifeline for remote communities, as it enables the transportation of medical patients, essential supplies such as food and medication, and provincial service staff from several departments.

Throughout the negotiation process, the premier committed to maintaining this vital service at current or improved levels, and finding a solution that ensures uninterrupted, reliable and cost-effective services for all Manitobans who rely on them.

“The AMC leadership has been resolute for many years on the need for improved transport infrastructure, including air services, for our First Nations across our traditional territories,” said Dumas. “Discussions with government officials and representatives from the private sector on the creation of a Manitoba First Nations Airport Authority represent a critical first step towards First Nations control of air transport and marine infrastructure. On behalf of the AMC, I commend the premier and Province of Manitoba for their efforts at strengthening our relationship through economic reconciliation.”

Building on the sale of Grace Lake Airport near The Pas to Missinippi Airways in 2019, the province expanded its discussions with Indigenous partners through the AMC to consider transferring assets, ownership and operations of NAMO to the jurisdiction of Manitoba’s First Nations.

“The Barren Lands First Nation welcomes this important announcement as a sign of good faith by the Province of Manitoba,” said Chief John Clarke. “I applaud my colleagues within the AMC leadership for their vision and determination for First Nations-led transport independence, and recognize the political will of the government of Manitoba for joining us at the discussion table for joint planning on the way forward for Manitoba First Nations air transport infrastructure.”

The province and AMC will work diligently in the coming months in hopes of reaching a mutually beneficial agreement with a smooth transition of assets beginning this summer.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ATTACHED

Backgrounder

NORTHERN AIRPORTS AND MARINE OPERATIONS (NAMO) PROPERTIES

Airport Facilities

- Berens River
- Bloodvein River
- Brochet
- Cross Lake
- Easterville
- Gods Lake Narrows
- Gods River
- Ilford
- Island Lake
- Lac Brochet
- Little Grand Rapids
- Norway House
- Oxford House
- Pikwitonei
- Poplar River
- Pukatawagan
- Red Sucker Lake
- St. Theresa Point
- Shamattawa
- South Indian Lake
- Tadoule Lake
- York Landing

Marine Facilities

- Matheson Island ferry
- Norway House/Sea Falls ferry
- South Indian Lake ferry
- Split Lake/York Landing ferry
- Selkirk storage compound