



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AMC reacts to introduction of Bill C-15 in the House of Commons

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) issues this press release in reaction to today’s introduction of Bill C-15, An Act respecting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, that was introduced in the House of Commons today by the Justice Minister and Attorney General of Canada, David Lametti.

At their press conference, Minister Lametti and the National Indigenous leadership confirmed that many resource development conglomerates endorse the Bill for the “certainty” and “economic stability” that it provides. Bill C-15 received first reading today. Information obtained by the AMC reveals that the Department of Justice held “engagement” sessions with Indigenous groups on the legislative initiative in Manitoba on October 28, 2020. The AMC has not received any information on how First Nations in Manitoba were involved and engaged in the process leading up to the drafting of Bill C-15.

“In addition to the certainty it provides for industry and resource extraction, today’s introduction of Bill C-15 in the House signals the formalization of another federal approach to bring sovereign Treaty First Nations under federalism and, to use Minister Lametti’s words, ‘breathe life into Section 35 rights,’” stated AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas. “Like many First Nations leaders and citizens across the country, I listened with a great deal of interest to the press conference for any reference to the duty to consult and accommodate the Treaty First Nations in Manitoba. There was a lot of symbolism and nice words for a ‘better Canada’, human rights, and free, prior and informed consent expressed by Minister Lametti. Unfortunately, there was no reference to meaningfully consulting the Treaty Nations in Manitoba on this particular process that is before us and that is being pushed through Parliament to meet a federally imposed deadline. There was talk of “balance” at the press conference; however, I was struck by Minister Bennett’s immediate reference to ‘self-governing’ Indigenous communities and to ‘modern treaties’ in her remarks, which revealed a bias against and were an insult to the AMC member Treaty Nations.”

Grand Chief Dumas, added, “As Treaty Nations, the AMC member First Nations have specific concerns on the effects of this legislation on the Treaty relationship; and we have specific concerns with the division of powers and existing federal legislation such as the Natural Resources Transfer Act, which gives exclusive jurisdiction over natural resources to the provinces and territories.”

“I agree with one of the comments at today’s press conference, which referenced careful scrutiny that First Nations will be giving to this Bill in the coming weeks. Following further analysis, the AMC and its member First Nations will have more to say in the coming weeks on this process, and how it impacts on our rights and accommodates the specific concerns of First Nations in Manitoba,” concluded AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas.

For more information, please contact:

Stacia Franz

Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

Email: sfranz@manitobachiefs.com

Phone: 204-292-1504

About the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

The AMC was formed in 1988 by the Chiefs in Manitoba to advocate on issues that commonly affect First Nations in Manitoba. AMC is an authorized representative of 62 of the 63 First Nations in Manitoba with a total of more than 151,000 First Nation citizens in the province, accounting for approximately 12 percent of the provincial population. AMC represents a diversity of Anishinaabe (Ojibway), Nehetho / Ininew (Cree), Anishinew (Ojibwe-Cree), Denesuline (Dene) and Dakota Oyate (Dakota) people.