



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs  
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 8, 2020

## **AMC comments on the Manitoba government's decision to extend essential supports for youth aging out of the CFS system during the COVID-19 pandemic**

**Treaty One Territory, Manitoba.** The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) is wary of today's announcement from the government of Manitoba that supports and services will continue to be provided for foster children aging out of care when they reach 18 years of age for the duration of COVID-19 pandemic.

Assembly of Manitoba Chief Grand Chief Arlen Dumas said "Providing additional supports and services for youth aging out of care, many of them First Nations, has long been advocated by the AMC and others. This announcement, albeit temporary only until September 30, 2020, is a measure that will protect many First Nation young adults."

Considering the fact that at least 50% of homeless people surveyed by the 2018 Winnipeg Street Census were involved with CFS and also determined that 66% of homeless people who were involved with CFS were homeless within the first year of aging out of care, this action will save lives of these youth. Premier Pallister has offered loose commitments to addressing the issues identified in the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls National Inquiry Report. Young women aging out of the CFS system in the midst a global pandemic should easily be a priority without limitation.

"When First Nations youth age out of care, many have nowhere to go. Homeless people are at considerable risk for COVID-19. Considering that they have no possible way of practicing safe measures such as physical distancing and even washing hands, having no supports or services or housing when they age out of care is a very dangerous proposition" said Grand Chief Dumas.

Put in context, the province of Manitoba imposed block-funding through its "reform" of child welfare, and granting of extended care for youth who reached the age of 18 was often denied. The federal Children's Special Allowances provides payments to be applied exclusively toward the care, maintenance, education, training or advancement of children in care. However, since 2005, the province of Manitoba forces Child and Family Services Agencies to remit the CSA back to the province, leaving children with nothing when they age out of care. The day before the province of Manitoba declared a state of emergency because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Bill 34 was introduced into the Legislative Assembly that retroactively legalizes Manitoba's actions since 2005, as well as take away the right to sue regarding Children's Special Allowances.

Since the provincial declaration of the state of emergency, the government of Manitoba also reversed its promise to end birth alerts, blaming the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Grand Chief Dumas concluded "The government of Manitoba must do more for all First Nations children in care. Decisions regarding our babies, supports for children while in care, and when they age out of the system should be made by First Nations, and I call on the government of Manitoba to act honourably and work with First Nations so the provincial policies pre-COVID-19 remain in the past."



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**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 / Inineu (Cree), Anishininew (Ojibwe-Cree), Denesuline (Dene) and Dakota Oyate (Dakota) people.