



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs  
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 23, 2020

### **AMC welcomes federal support for First Nation post-secondary students and calls for stable and predictable funding to meet their needs**

**Treaty One Territory, Manitoba** - The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) welcomes the announcement by Prime Minister Trudeau for support for First Nations post-secondary students previously not eligible for the other announced federal COVID-19 relief programs, but also notes that it falls short in meeting their actual needs.

The Canada Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) will provide a total of \$9 billion nationally to eligible post-secondary students. The CESB will mainly be for lost summer employment opportunities due to the pandemic. Of this amount, one-time funding of \$75.2 million is set aside for increasing the budget of the Post-secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP), and other existing distinctions-based post-secondary student programs for 2020-21.

AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas said, “The post-secondary student support funding that was announced by the Prime Minister is welcomed. It will ensure that our continuing post-secondary students, as well as new cohorts of post-secondary students, are supported through the summer and into the fall with the onset of the new academic year. However, additional supports will be required to meet the actual needs of our students.”

The Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) offers \$2,000 a month. However, the new announcement is much lower at \$1,250 per student (those with dependents will receive \$1,750). This amount will not cover the costs of rent, food, plus the additional expenses related to the pandemic.

Grand Chief Dumas continued, “I again want to commend the leadership of First Nations in Manitoba during this pandemic crisis. They know what our people need, and have responded accordingly. I encourage Canada to work with the Chiefs of Manitoba when making decisions that affect their citizens. Benevolent and unilateral decisions that affect First Nations should not continue to be made, while understandably action must be taken quickly, it should also be done in a manner that respects First Nations’ autonomy, knowledge and expertise in order to meet their unique needs.”

Canada has consistently underfunded the PSSSP. The lack of adequate funding of the PSSSP has severely prevented many First Nations in Manitoba from pursuing a post-secondary education, especially for those students in northern and remote First Nations. Neither the AMC nor First Nations in Manitoba were involved in determining the amount.

“With guaranteed and predictable PSSSP funding, and a First Nations led process for post-secondary institutional development in Manitoba, our post-secondary students will then be supported and prepared to continue their academic and lifelong learning pursuits, as well as their individual dreams and goals for the overall and collective benefit of the First Nations in Manitoba.” Grand Chief Dumas concluded, “First Nations in Manitoba will be awaiting further details on how this announced funding will break down and be distributed within the Manitoba region and, ultimately, to our local control systems of post-secondary education. The AMC calls on Canada to provide predictable, adequate and equitable funding to First Nations students rather than one-time funding and, to this end, the AMC will work with First Nations in Manitoba to identify the actual costs for their post-secondary education students.”

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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 / Inineew (Cree), Anishinew (Ojibwe-Cree), Denesuline (Dene) and Dakota Oyate (Dakota) people.