



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 21, 2020

AMC welcomes the Prime Minister's announcement for support for urban and off-reserve First Nations

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) Grand Chief Arlen Dumas welcomes today's announcement by Prime Minister Trudeau of \$75 million to support the needs of urban and off-reserve First Nations citizens in weathering the COVID-19 pandemic.

Grand Chief Dumas said, "The Assembly welcomes today's announcement by Prime Minister Trudeau for COVID-19 pandemic support for off-reserve and urban First Nation citizens in Manitoba. During non-pandemic times, we see first-hand in downtown Winnipeg every day the devastating impacts of colonialism on First Nations peoples in this country. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these impacts and drawn the curtain on the extreme poverty and homelessness experienced by First Nations peoples in Winnipeg. The pandemic has led to even more and extreme hardships experienced by our urban and off-reserve people as they seek help from the AMC and other political and service delivery organizations."

Winnipeg, Thompson and other non-reserve locations are home to many First Nations citizens from First Nations in Manitoba and neighbouring Treaty territories outside of Manitoba and across Canada, many who also access many AMC programs and services. The AMC advocates on behalf of approximately 150,000 of its own First Nations citizens in Manitoba both on and off-reserve and, through its Chiefs-mandated and arms-length service delivery organizations, provides direct and indirect social sector programs for all First Nations citizens regardless of residency or jurisdiction. The AMC will be advocating strongly on behalf of First Nations to ensure that an equitable portion of this funding reaches citizens of First Nations in Manitoba living in urban centres, such as Winnipeg and Thompson.

Grand Chief Dumas added, "Ideally, for First Nations in Manitoba, the federal funding commitment for First Nations should go directly to First Nations. It should not need to go through an intermediary organization, as it is Canada that is unilaterally determining when funding goes for their citizens. Indeed, I have heard from many Manitoba Chiefs expressing concern that they are not provided the funding directly in order to meet the needs of their citizens simply because they reside off reserve."

Grand Chief continued, "Any intermediary organization that receives funding for citizens of First Nations in Manitoba should be mandated by their respective First Nation. This is of particular concern and relevance for First Nations in Manitoba, whose funding for their citizens is often passed to other organizations not even mandated by the Chiefs. The AMC has also experienced firsthand severe pressure on our programs and service delivery entities to provide supports to existing urban and off-reserve citizens since the closure of the Indian and Metis Friendship Centre in Winnipeg. We know a number of First Nations in Manitoba have the

capacity to provide for their citizens off reserve and in urban centres. There are other First Nations-mandated entities that can assist with other First Nations in Manitoba to serve their citizens.”

Grand Chief Dumas concluded, “Recognizing the lack of engagement and consultation with First Nation in Manitoba on the mechanism for distribution to First Nations in Manitoba, and the need to respond to COVID-19 in an expeditious manner, I sincerely hope that the distribution should be done equitably amongst the Indigenous organization service providers through Indigenous Services Canada (ISC). I therefore call on Prime Minister Trudeau and ISC Minister Miller, to work with our Chiefs in Manitoba, the AMC Secretariat, and our service delivery entities to ensure existing social services are bolstered for our people, and that new services and programs are identified and sustainable supports are provided during the state of emergency and post-pandemic. I believe this state of emergency and pandemic may be an opportunity for the federal government to make a meaningful and lasting difference for First Nations in Manitoba by resourcing and empowering their leadership and governance structures to respond to the diversity of urban and off-reserve First Nations citizens throughout our Treaty territories.”

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