



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AMC supports reform measures for the City of Winnipeg police service

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) continues to voice support for reform measures for the Winnipeg Police Service (WPS) in line with what many Winnipeg citizens and organizations have been saying historically and as calls for fundamental police reform are sweeping across Canada, the United States, and the World. WPS Chief Danny Smyth’s recent comments at the meeting of the Winnipeg Police Board, and to the assembled media following his presentation, may also open the doors to the conversation on alternate use of law enforcement resources which may, in turn, reduce First Nation’s incarceration rates and First Nation’s fatalities with police involved shootings in the City of Winnipeg.

Grand Chief Dumas stated, “the current broad conversation that we are all having on the effects of policing on Indigenous and Black peoples is an opportunity to effect change within our City, to ensure that First Nations are treated humanely and with the same level of respect and dignity by the WPS that is afforded to every other citizen of this City. The AMC has long advocated for extensive and fundamental reform of the enabling legislation from which municipal, provincial and federal police services draw their powers. If this legislative reform means a systematic defunding and reduction of police services to redirect police budgets to health, education and social services organizations such as the Bear Clan, then so be it,” said Grand Chief Dumas.

“The AMC has made gestures of reconciliation with the WPS as well as with RCMP D Division, including the historic signing of the Moose Hide campaign agreement and a proposed MOU between the AMC and the WPS. These agreements, however, do not preclude the AMC concerns about an existing WPS culture, and an internal underlying structure, that perpetuates and facilitates disproportionate violence and the ongoing assault and abuse of First Nations citizens within the City,” said Grand Chief Dumas.

“First Nations in Manitoba were still reeling from the police shootings of three of our citizens over ten days in April, as we stood in support of Black Lives Matter and the mass protests that took place locally and all over the world in reaction to ongoing and widespread police brutality,” continued the Grand Chief. “The latest deaths of First Nations in WPS involved shootings are resonating within all Manitoba First Nations and throughout all First Nations regions across the country and, in conjunction with the Black Lives Matter movement, the AMC is provoking a broad conversation on what policing means and what a rebalancing of resources could mean in relation to justice for First Nations and in relation to today’s society. By invoking a united front, and calling for national support for the humane treatment of First Nations peoples by municipal, provincial and federal law enforcement officers, the AMC is calling for wide spread policy reform, starting with provincial and federal reviews of the Police Services Acts, which are the legislative mechanisms that are at the root of a police culture that enables the brutalizing of already marginalized citizens and the infringing of their civil rights.”

The Grand Chief added, “This history has permitted WPS members to stray far from their oath of, ‘to serve and protect.’ The police oath is supposed to refer to citizens; however, with the recent highly publicized incidents, here in Winnipeg, with Chief Adam, and during the recent protests in the U.S., it appears that the police are more interested in serving and protecting their own from any type of transparency or



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accountability for several documented and substantiated incidents of egregious assaults on peaceful protesters and the disproportionate use of force on First Nations in the City of Winnipeg which has resulted in the death of our community members.”

Grand Chief Dumas concluded, “We have seen WPS budgets increase substantially during the last 20 years where it now makes up nearly 30 per cent of the City of Winnipeg’s total operating budget, while social housing funding, children’s programs, and recreation funding has been cut. Although measures such as body cameras, reform of oversight bodies, and more police training on de-escalation and dealing with addictions and mental illnesses all would be positive steps in the right direction, nothing less than legislative reform is needed to defund the police and a mindset and culture that pits law enforcement officers against the very people that they are sworn to serve and protect.”

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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 per cent of the provincial population. AMC represents a diversity of Anishinaabe (Ojibway), Nehetho / Ininew (Cree), Anishinew (Ojibwe- Cree), Denesuline (Dene) and Dakota Oyate