



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Statement of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs In Response to the Speech from the Throne**

**Treaty One Territory, Winnipeg, MB** – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) is issuing this statement in response to the Speech from the Throne, which was shared in Ottawa yesterday.

AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas said, “The Prime Minister’s Speech from the Throne contained a number of initiatives that will address issues of great importance to First Nations in Manitoba. Like First Nations across the country, we watched the Throne Speech for a way to ensure our First Nations can continue to directly respond to COVID-19 by keeping them safe, healthy, and for a way they can economically recover, all the while ensuring respect for their Treaty and inherent rights.”

### **STATEMENT FROM ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA CHIEFS ON THE SPEECH FROM THE THRONE:**

A number of major announcements were made with the Speech from the Throne that directly affect First Nations in Manitoba and their citizens living on and off reserve. In addition to keeping people safe during COVID-19, this includes addressing homelessness and improving infrastructure; identifying support for shelters and transitional housing for women escaping violence; accelerating a universal broadband fund to bring connectivity to all northern and isolated First Nations; addressing systemic racism; investing in clean drinking water; expediting work to co-develop health legislation for Indigenous peoples; reforming the criminal justice system, the modernization of police training, and the recognition of First Nation policing as an essential service.

There is clearly a need to create bilateral relationships with First Nations in Manitoba to move these federal commitments forward in a meaningful way that reflects the on the ground realities in our Nations.

When this pandemic first hit our country, First Nation leadership through the office of the AMC created the First Nations Pandemic Response Team with a number of First Nations partners like the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak and the First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba. This team worked with both levels of government to create a First Nations data sharing agreement that allowed us to track testing and cases that became positive based on citizenship, it is the first of its kind in Canada.

It is when First Nations in their respective regions are allowed to take the lead, precedents are set. These successes help to form the relationships and partnerships that provide the basis for more robust and meaningful dialogue on establishing the benchmarks we know we can meet that will enhance access to health, social, and economic opportunities for all First Nations in Manitoba.

Leadership in Manitoba have been working on clean energy projects. They have been addressing the serious issues surrounding our Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Our leadership have been creating urban reserves throughout the Province to improve the economic prosperity of their Nations and creating employment opportunities for their citizens. We were directed by leadership to address justice-related issues and as

such, invited the Supreme Court to Winnipeg to hear of the need to re-examine the justice system and its impacts in our Nations, families and youth. The first visit ever of its kind.

As the original stewards of these lands, waters and air, we agree with the existential threat of global warming caused by CO2 gases. Our position is that First Nations laws and concepts of justice need to be recognized as central to the battle against global warming and CO2 emissions.

The AMC looks forward to working with Canada on how we can replicate the success of various First Nations green energy projects in all our First Nations as part of the collective First Nations Power Authority as mandated by First Nations in Manitoba.

The immediate pressing issues, however, are important as well, as we support the frontline needs and everyday issues of First Nations on and off reserve which, as you know, are many.

The federal Liberals when they were elected built on this work and extended the conversation with Canadians on reconciliation with First Nations. We have to remember this history for the current context and how we got to where we are.

The AMC member First Nations have also historically advocated on issues of housing, water and infrastructure, child welfare, MMIWG, policing and Justice, Jordan's Principle, off-reserve poverty challenges and all the social issues arising out of a lack of First Nations' participation in Manitoba's economy.

It is crucial that Canada, with these announcements, work with the AMC and its member First Nations to address regional priorities. This is critical to the empowerment of First Nations in Manitoba, because responsible, sustainable economic empowerment underpins community development and the well-being, safety and security of all our citizens.

We can create a narrative of optimism, strength, and empowerment, to effect policy change for Education, Health, Jordan's Principle, the MMIWG tragedy, and Child Welfare.

When the time comes that health and safety and all of the logistical issues associated with this pandemic are no longer the immediate needs to the Leadership, then it will be the time to map what this pandemic has proven to be the real needs of our Nations are and begin to use the relationships created and these announcements, to develop sustainable solutions that truly meet the needs of each First Nation in Manitoba.

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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.