



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA CHIEFS CHALLENGES THE PROVINCE OF MANITOBA'S ATTEMPT TO TAKE AWAY THE RIGHTS OF FIRST NATIONS CHILDREN

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba - The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) has filed a Notice of Application on the matter of *The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act* (BITSA) to the Manitoba Queen's Bench. Since the introduction of BITSA, the AMC, led by the First Nations Family Advocate Office (FNFAO) has been advocating for the removal of section 231 of BITSA.

"The AMC Women's Council stands against the province of Manitoba's actions of capturing the Children's Special Allowances. Instead of providing the essential care for our First Nation in the government system, they are taking advantage of their hardships and tragedies by limiting their opportunities. We stand in solidarity and support the fast and the various initiatives of the AMC-FNAO in addressing these issues and ensuring the voices of First Nations are being heard," stated Chief Francine Meeches, Swan Lake First Nations, Chair of the AMC Women's Council.

The Notice of Application seeks an order, among other things, to challenge the claw back, remittance, denial and failure to provide adequate supports to First Nations children in care under the Children's Special Allowances (CSA) Act. In addition, the AMC is taking issue with the failure of the province to apply the CSA exclusively toward the care, maintenance, education, training or advancement of a child in care; and the denial of the right to access the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench by those affected.

"By challenging the province of Manitoba of their tactics, we are protecting the most vulnerable people in society, our First Nations children in care. It is disgraceful to have a government go to such lengths to protect themselves from any liability or accountability. They are trying to hide behind legislation that infringes on our Constitutional Rights by denying access to the justice system," stated Grand Chief Arlen Dumas.

Prior to filing the Notice of Application, the AMC FNFAO called on all First Nation citizens, allies and supporters to lift their sacred pipes in solidarity to ensure the spirit and intent of the Notice of Application will follow through the proper channels and that First Nations children receive the justice they are entitled to.

"As an advocate, I have witnessed the bitter realities faced by our children and families involved with the child welfare system. These children are faced with overwhelming challenges, and at times have experienced significant trauma in their short lives due to coming into care. These challenges and the effects of such traumatic separation continue into their adult life. It is disheartening to see a government further discriminate and take advantage of these children, capitalizing off their misery by stealing their CSA to help cover their expenses and debt. The province is violating their rights to have access to the justice system, and their opportunities are further stripped away," stated Cora Morgan, First Nations Family Advocate.

“The legislative bar to recourse for the reduction of the available financial resources for First Nations children in care entrenches and exacerbates the particular and acute vulnerabilities experienced by First Nations children while in care and at the time of transitioning out of care. This is inconsistent with both the Crown’s fiduciary duty owed to First Nations and to the honour of the Crown,” concluded Grand Chief Dumas.

On October 7, 2020, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs began a Team Fast until there was decision made on Bill 2. Today is the last day of the Fast as the government of Manitoba has passed Bill 2. The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs extends their gratitude to the various people who supported the Fast, those who volunteered to fast; Bear Clan who provided security, and donations of blankets and wood; the Hudson family for donating blankets for the Fasters, the Volk family who donated wood for the sacred fire, Dustin Simmons for his generous donation, and the people who visited the ceremony site to show their support.

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For more information, please contact:

Stacia Franz

Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

Email: sfranz@manitobachiefs.com

Phone: 204-292-1504

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