



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 8, 2020

The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs has serious concerns following tactless comments made by Minister Stefanson

Treaty 1 Territory - The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) has grave concerns following statements made by the Minister of Families Heather Stephenson in response to collective efforts to bring awareness to the longstanding issue of the theft of Children's Special Allowance from First Nations children in care off-reserve.

In response to the AMC joint press release regarding the *Budget Implementation Tax Statutes Amendment Act* that was released yesterday, the Provincial Minister of Families made the following media statement, "the government no longer orders Child and Family Services (CFS) Agencies to remit the money, and any legislation we introduce in this area will be designed to put it behind us while protecting Manitoba taxpayers."

"This is a prime example of how the Pallister government openly discriminates against First Nations children and it further demonstrates how the rights of our First Nations children are insignificant in relation to the bottom line and taxpayer coffers," said AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas.

The funding for Children's Special Allowance comes from Federal government funding. The provincial government captured this funding from 2005 to 2019 to cover the very deficit that the province created. Instead of focusing on its legal actions, they are shifting the blame by implying that they are saving taxpayers monies. The province is penalizing First Nations children in order to address deficits in budgets that they themselves created.

The Minister of Families openly admits that tax payers supersede First Nations children. This government expects that the theft of \$338 million dollars stolen from First Nations children is something that can be merely swept under the rug. There is no regard or respect for the thousands of marginalized, stolen First Nations children that have been impacted by the immoral actions of the provincial government.

"There has long been a well-oiled strategy for the Province to become a First Nation child apprehending machine, commodifying children: likely being a ploy to be able to steal Federal funds from them. The incompetence of this Pallister government, not to mention the callous and cold operation of their Minister of Families, is utterly despicable and needs to stop. First Nations children deserve respect and this is beyond disrespectful," concluded AMC Grand Chief Dumas.

The AMC calls on the Provincial government to properly address the concerns of AMC and accept responsibility for their unequivocally wrongful actions and attempts to deflect these concerns.

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