



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AMC opposes Manitoba plan to implement a curfew

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) stands in opposition to the Province of Manitoba’s plan to implement a curfew. The Province is contemplating a curfew, which would not permit people to be in public during restricted hours to flatten the curve of COVID-19 infections. It is the position of the Assembly that the contemplated curfew, while potentially effective in some respects in preventing the spread of the virus if implemented properly, would adversely and disproportionately affect First Nations citizens in our urban centres, many of whom are homeless with underlying mental health and addiction issues.

AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas states, “AMC member First Nations citizens have been directly and indirectly impacted by Residential Schools, the 60’s scoop, systemic racism, and other traumas associated with policies implemented by various levels of government. As a result of these traumas and ineffective social safety policies, many First Nation citizens are homeless and coping with effects of these substandard government initiatives by surviving on the streets by any means. The most recent Street Census indicates that the Indigenous population makes up the majority of the homeless population in Winnipeg. The proposed curfew would subject our already vulnerable people to further harm through a poorly conceived and executed process.”

“The online survey for public feedback on the curfew went live yesterday. This flawed process does not consider the impact of a curfew on First Nations and issues of homelessness, which is a significant issue in the City of Winnipeg. If the homeless are not able to get a bed at a shelter, which are in short supply as it is, their only other option is to survive on the streets. It is unjust and a sad reflection of society if marginalized people are going to be punished for being in public when that is their only option,” said Grand Chief Dumas.

“The government could better flatten the curve if they targeted the risky behaviors of the mainstream, which have dramatically increased the COVID-19 numbers in Manitoba. The risky behaviors of patrons at establishments and venues should be the focus rather than vulnerable citizens who have no place to self-isolate or go to abide with a proposed curfew.

There have been many reports of restaurants and alcohol-serving establishments disregarding health orders with little to no meaningful enforcement by the authorities, and further, a number of drinking establishments that were previously fined and then recklessly allowed to reopen as part of a short-sighted plan by the Province to “restart the economy”.

We see the effects of this poorly executed reopening strategy not only on the mainstream public but further on those who continue to suffer and struggle with homelessness on a daily and widespread basis in Winnipeg. The focus should remain on the behaviors and consequences of those who do not abide by established health orders. I call on the Province to more carefully design public consultation on the proposed curfew, to implement it with the most marginalized and vulnerable in mind and with clear plans to assist those who don’t have a house to attend during curfew hours,” concluded the AMC Grand Chief.

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