



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 13, 2020

AMC calls for Prime Minister Trudeau to recognize Manitoba First Nation Leadership at the dedicated First Ministers meeting on health care funding

Treaty One Territory, MB - The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) calls on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to ensure that First Nations in Manitoba are represented and have a seat at the upcoming December First Ministers' meeting (FMM) on federal health funding transfers. The AMC asserts this position because First Nations citizens access healthcare in Manitoba disproportionately more frequently due to underlying issues and healthcare needs: therefore, Manitoba First Nation leadership should have a seat at the First Ministers' meeting.

AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas states, "I acknowledge the federal government for the recently announced dedicated funding for First Nations to fight COVID-19 in Manitoba. However, for far too long the provincial government has received federal health transfers on behalf of First Nations in Manitoba for insured health services, primary and public health care, and with little to no positive outcomes or accountabilities to First Nations.

Past health transfers have not improved health outcomes for First Nations in this province; they have, in fact, resulted in a racist colonial healthcare system that does not provide quality and high standards of care to First Nations citizens who have premature death rates, disproportionate health outcomes and more hospitalizations than all other Manitobans. How can First Nations be assured that any increases or changes to federal health transfers being discussed at FMM increases benefit to First Nations citizens? It is a question of why First Nations leadership has not already been invited to the table for this discussion. There is no time to stick with the status quo and I call on the Federal government to immediately extend the invitation to First Nation leadership, not as a one-off gesture, but instead as a new way forward that moves towards inclusivity, respect and mutual collaboration to the benefit of First Nations."

"As this COVID-19 pandemic continues to worsen and present new issues, the long standing gaps faced by First Nations citizens within healthcare in Manitoba are now urgent matters and will continue to magnify. These gaps have resulted in First Nations citizens being at increased risk of COVID-19, increased numbers of infections throughout our First Nations and disproportionate hospitalizations and intensive care, as documented by the Manitoba First Nations COVID-19 Pandemic Response Coordination Team."

"It is the long-standing position of the AMC that any funding that is allocated for or on behalf of First Nations should go directly to First Nations and not be funneled through the province, notwithstanding Section 92 of the Constitution Act, 1982 and the division of powers," said Grand Chief Dumas.

Grand Chief Dumas concluded, "First Nation Leadership should present these outstanding issues directly to all of the Premiers at FMM, and not rely on Manitoba's government to speak on behalf of the needs of First Nations citizens and leadership. First Nations should be in control of decision-making in the health sector and affiliated resources in this province. AMC demands provincial accountability for First Nations health outcomes and ongoing and sustainable resources put in place for preventative and proactive measures now and beyond COVID-19."

- 30 -

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.