



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The AMC is disturbed by the Province of Manitoba's low compliance rates relating to First Nations children

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) has grave concerns about the lack of commitment from the Province of Manitoba to implement recommendations made by the Manitoba Advocate for Children and Youth (MACY) as identified in the recent report titled, *Are They Listening? Summary of Government Compliance with Recommendations issued under the Advocate of Children and Youth Act*.

In 2018, without involvement or engagement of First Nations in Manitoba or the AMC, the Province of Manitoba unilaterally passed *The Advocate for Children and Youth Act* that expanded the scope and authority of MACY. As part of their expanded mandate, the MACY is now able to publicly report on the government's progress regarding recommendations made in various reports. From 2018 to 2020, MACY identified 23 recommendations to improve government services as it pertains to children and youth. However, the compliance rate to implement these recommendations is significantly lower.

"Many of the recommendations in these reports were informed by the tragic loss of First Nations children and youth who were chronically underserved by government systems. Our First Nations children are grossly overrepresented in these systems including 90% of First Nations children in the provincial foster care system, and 80% of Indigenous youth in the Manitoba youth justice system," stated Chief Francine Meeches, Chair of the AMC Women's Council.

"This is a prime example of where our most vulnerable citizens, our children and youth, rank on the list of priorities for the Government of Manitoba. The provincial government's decision to expand the mandate of MACY offered little than an illusion of commitment to the wellbeing of children and youth. In reality, rather than being met with tangible solutions and outcomes, children and youth continue to be faced with nothing but smoke and mirrors," stated AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas.

In addition to the lack of compliance, the report identified that due to the lack of comprehensive youth-focused mental health supports, the province has been utilizing Child and Family Services and the justice system to intervene in crisis situations. It was further identified that front line workers in the child welfare system are not adequately equipped to respond to high-risk interventions; as a result of a lack of training in the implementation of the provincial minimum standards under the Child and Family Services Act.

"We continue to witness firsthand how these sectors of the provincial government are being used as placeholders for inadequate mental health and addiction supports. This is an issue of deeply rooted systemic racism in the Province of Manitoba, coupled with what appears to be strategic underfunding of preventive care needed to support these vulnerable children. The province of Manitoba needs to do more than perpetuate the status quo," concluded Chief Francine Meeches.

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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.