



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AMC statement on Provincial Government Cabinet shuffle

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) issues this statement in response to today's Provincial Government Cabinet shuffle. Premier Pallister announced several cabinet changes, including several that directly impact First Nations in Manitoba. Minister Friesen is no longer Minister for Health and Seniors with the position now being filled by Minister Heather Stefanson. Along with several other appointments a change of note was the newly created portfolio of Mental Health, Wellness and Recovery now led by newly appointed Minister Audrey Gordon. Minister Stefanson now leads the Province's efforts on the COVID-19 vaccination and health supports and services as authorized under section 91 of the *Canadian Constitution Act*. Aspects of First Nations health services, benefits and supports are a Federal responsibility.

AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas said, "I thank Minister Friesen for his efforts during his time as Health Minister. The AMC and the First Nations Pandemic Response Coordination Team (PRCT) look forward to working with the new Health Minister. I, at this time, call on Minister Stefanson and all Provincial Cabinet members, to make a commitment to and take action on a coordinated and expedited roll out of the COVID-19 vaccines so that all First Nations, including our remote and isolated First Nations, are vaccinated as soon as possible. I take this opportunity to remind Minister Stefanson that 49% of active COVID-19 cases are First Nations citizens and that more than 100 First Nations citizens have died as a result of COVID-19. First Nations, are the most marginalized and disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and cannot wait while the province continues to figure out its vaccination strategy and while the Federal government sits idly by. First Nations lives are at stake and the time to move decisively is now."

Grand Chief Dumas added, "the Federal government must also take some responsibility for the substandard COVID-19 vaccination strategy for First Nations at this time. While I acknowledge that aspects of health are a provincial responsibility, we can see that this delegation of federal responsibility to the provinces is not only ineffective for First Nations, it is also an infringement of the Treaty right to health and an abdication of federal responsibilities. Indigenous Services Canada and the First Nations Inuit Health Branch must lead and play a central role in federal obligations to First Nations and the Treaty right to Health."

Grand Chief Dumas concluded, "The new Provincial cabinet members must not only work closely with their Federal counterparts, but must also work with First Nations to ensure that all First Nations in Manitoba are protected and immunized during the pandemic."

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