



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AMC Statement regarding extreme temperatures and those experiencing homelessness

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) issues the following statement regarding the recent extreme cold temperatures in Manitoba and the need for strategy, funding and assistance for those experiencing homelessness. AMC further extends its condolences, thoughts and prayers to the family of 46-year-old Robert Powderhorn, who died due to exposure to extreme cold temperatures this past weekend.

AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas stated, “to the family and friends of Mr. Powderhorn I send my deepest condolences. My heart goes out to each and every one of them and to everyone in Tadoule Lake following the loss of their brother and former band councillor.”

“I want to express my sadness and frustration to not only the family, but to every Manitoban that understands the extreme weather we face in this province. We often lament our car not starting, but fail to appreciate that for those experiencing homelessness, that these extreme conditions are not just an inconvenience, but a death sentence and that they are completely preventable. COVID-19 has exacerbated the seriousness of this issue and while a long time ago was the right time to act to prevent further loss of life, today is the next best timing and I implore all levels of government to come forward with funding and assistance to prevent another needless loss of life.

“It is further very troubling to hear that the rate of homelessness in Treaty 1 territory is predominately First Nations people. In these extreme and freezing conditions, it is imperative that these organizations that are funded to address homelessness are ensuring that their services are as inclusive and accessible as possible. It’s truly a matter of life or death in these frigid temperatures.”

AMC’s Eagle Urban Transition Centre (EUTC) has provided the following suggestions for consideration to work in short order to alleviate the risk of death in the next few days:

- for the City of Winnipeg to move with the same sense of urgency to locate those experiencing homelessness as they did when dismantling shelters and homeless camps;
- for the City of Winnipeg to provide short term solutions for a warm place for those experiencing homelessness to stay 24/7;
- for the City of Winnipeg to open community centres, movie theatres, hotels and the convention centre immediately as possible options to provide reprieve;
- for all levels of government to provide mechanisms to facilitate outreach to identify those experiencing homelessness;
- for all levels of government to provide funding for warm clothes to be purchased and distributed immediately; and
- for a multilevel government, in collaboration with First Nation leadership, initiative to establish a long term solution for the government to invest in affordable housing and programming for our province’s most vulnerable population.

"I implore the City of Winnipeg to ensure that heaters in transit bus shelters keep the heaters on day and night during extreme weather conditions so that there is no further unnecessary loss of life due to a completely preventable situation. Homelessness is preventable and there needs to be a concentrated effort to address this issue. There should be a strategy that fully involves First Nations citizens at the table to discuss these issues and opportunities that multiple levels of government can work towards to avoid further death in Winnipeg and Manitoba. The issue of homelessness is rooted in the historical treatment of the First Peoples of this land. In the efforts of reconciliation, addressing homelessness should be a priority and while we implore these measures to take place immediately during this extreme weather, we too demand that there be a more robust solution proposed for other scenarios and not just in extreme weather conditions," concluded Grand Chief Dumas.

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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.