



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 4, 2021

## **AMC CONDEMNS PALLISTER GOVERNMENT'S JURISDICTIONAL OVERREACH OF BILL 56**

**Treaty One Territory, Manitoba** – The AMC stands in condemnation of the Province's unjustified intrusion on the jurisdiction of First Nations through the tabling of Bill 56. Bill 56 removes section 9.4 of *The Smoking and Vapour Products Control Amendment Act* (the "*Smoking Act*"), which "exempts lands reserved for Indians and federal lands" from the application of the *Smoking Act*.

The tabling of Bill 56 follows the Province's underhanded attempt in July 2020 to ban smoking in VLT areas on First Nations reserves under COVID-19 emergency orders. In response to that attempt, AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas stated, "it is unacceptable and disheartening that the Pallister government and the Province would attempt to use the current COVID-19 health crisis to unilaterally usurp First Nations autonomy under the guise of a public health order." In response to the COVID-19 emergency order, Brokenhead Ojibway Nation filed a judicial review against Manitoba and the Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Corporation.

"In a time of reconciliation, this is not a positive step. Bill 56 is the Province proceeding with further steps to usurp First Nations jurisdiction. The Province failed to consult with any First Nations and is seen as a further attempt by the Province to control and limit constitutionally recognized and protected rights of First Nations. AMC and its members will continue to bring jurisdictional challenges through the court systems and fight as long as it takes for First Nations to receive autonomy. The Premier continues to refuse all First Nations attempts to resolve jurisdictional conflicts and appears content to continue his government's thinly veiled practices of systemic racism," said Grand Chief Dumas.

"The Premier cannot in one breath state unequivocally that, "the health and welfare of Indigenous Canadians is the principal responsibility of the federal government" as he did at a press conference on December 3, 2020, and then table Bill 56 which tramples upon constitutionally protected jurisdictional lines some three months later. To now repeal section 9.4 of the *Smoking Act* under the guise of health is a ridiculous and dastardly move by the Province that has, to date, offered no meaningful health assistance to First Nations in Manitoba."

"Any attempt by the Province to change the *Smoking Act* regarding First Nations reserves in Manitoba is illegitimate and unconstitutional. This issue goes far beyond smoking bans as it holds ill-considered constitutional ramifications and sets negative precedence of provinces overstepping and interfering with constitutionally recognized and protected rights of First Nations. The AMC will continue to bring collective action to right these wrongs and oversteps and will continue to work to undo any interference with First Nations jurisdiction in Manitoba and continue to fight for the autonomy of all First Nations in Manitoba," concluded Grand Chief Dumas.

**For more information, please contact:**

Stacia Franz

Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs

**Email:** [sfranz@manitobachiefs.com](mailto: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), Anishininew (Ojibwe-Cree), Denesuline (Dene) and Dakota Oyate (Dakota) people.