



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AMC stands in solidarity with frontline workers seeking fair collective bargaining from Manitoba Hydro and the Province

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) issues this statement today in support of striking members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 2034 (IBEW), as the members demand good faith negotiations and a fair contract from the Manitoba Hydro Crown Corporation (Hydro). The 2,300 union members have exercised their right to job action after rejecting the latest contract offer from Hydro, which is negotiating under an austerity mandate and political interference from the Province, to freeze the wages of its workers. The workers have also been forced to take unpaid days off and have been without a contract since 2018.

“The AMC stands in support of the members of IBEW as they attempt to negotiate a fair collective bargaining agreement with Hydro,” said Grand Chief Arlen Dumas. “The AMC is grateful for the efforts of the workers during the October 2019 storm, which impacted many First Nations in the south and forced residents to evacuate due to the loss of power. It was due to their dedication and swift action that power was restored to the affected First Nations in a timely manner, avoiding further hardship for First Nations citizens forced to evacuate their communities.”

“The Pallister government’s mistreatment of frontline workers, including those in the education and health sectors, has resulted in this current strike action by IBEW. The unionized workers are demanding an end to years of wage freezes, unpaid days off and a fair increase to wages indexed to inflation and enjoyed by other unionized workers in the federal sector. These workers have protections in place, which the Province is undermining and attacking as they continue to make Hydro their cash cow.”

The Province is also undermining Hydro itself by attempting to pass draconian laws, which force the utility to negotiate contracts with its workers from a place of cuts, layoffs, and wage freezes. Premier Pallister continues to fight a court decision last summer that struck down legislation for wage freezes for more than 100,000 public sector workers. Under these conditions it is difficult for Hydro and other provincial employers to negotiate in good faith with the unions representing frontline workers.”

“In spite of the court ruling and amidst a global pandemic, the Premier continues to dictate undemocratic policy against collective bargaining rights and continues to maintain that it has the right to set bargaining mandates for the public sector. In a memo to Hydro, the Premier further claims that Hydro wage freezes are needed due to ‘dramatically falling revenue’ and ‘a very large deficit’ due to the pandemic.” However, the third quarter report of Hydro shows an increase in net income of \$111 million, which is \$64 million than originally budgeted,” added Grand Chief Dumas.

“The Province continues to unilaterally raise the rates of Hydro customers, continues to strike down regulatory recommendations for an on-reserve customer class, while reaping the benefits of the publicly owned Crown Corporation for itself and the private sector. The AMC demands that that the Province respect the rights of Hydro workers and immediately facilitate a climate for good faith negotiations for the public sector workers who keep all Manitobans safe and secure during these challenging times.”

For more information, please contact:

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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.