



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AMC commends Finance Minister on Budget 2021 and welcomes historic First Nation specific investments

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) issues this statement in response to the release of *Federal Budget 2021: A Recovery Plan for Jobs, Growth, and Resilience* (Budget 2021). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this is the first Budget in two years and the first by the current minority Liberal government.

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, delivered Budget 2021 today, along with a motion that the House of Commons approve in general the budgetary policy of the government. In addition to historic Indigenous and First Nations investments of \$18 billion, the AMC applauds the government for its overall fiscal plan to restart the economy following the pandemic and its commitments to a national early learning and childcare strategy.

AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas said, 'I commend Minister Freeland on Budget 2021 and welcome the First Nations specific commitments. Budget 2021 is unprecedented in the scope of the investments for First Nations and in its importance to Canada overall. I urge the official opposition and the other national parties to support it in the House so that we can all, as First Nations and Canadians, get through the economic hardships and collectively emerge stronger from COVID-19. We specifically acknowledge Minister Freeland's comments that First Nations have led the way in battling COVID-19 due to the strong leadership of Chiefs across Canada. As we have all seen, COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted First Nations and magnified inequities. In light of these inequities, I thank Minister Miller and Minister Sajan for their collaborations and commitments to additional funding over the last year. First Nations have worked diligently to guide the government on targeted areas to focus on for public health measures for First Nations citizens. With Budget 2021, and to recover from COVID-19, we must maintain this focus with new, unprecedented social spending, economic development funding and other targeted funding for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, infrastructure and First Nations economies in Manitoba.'

The 2019 Budget contained \$4.7 billion over 6 years in investments for First Nations, Metis and Inuit. The AMC participated in pre-budget consultations in early 2020, when Grand Chief Arlen Dumas called for continued social spending along with significant and meaningful investments in infrastructure and economic development for First Nations and their businesses. Unfortunately, there was no Budget tabled for 2020, and it was instead replaced with a *Speech from the Throne*, a *Fall Economic Update*, and a *Healthy Economy Healthy Environment* recovery plan. The AMC maintains its position that the federal government must invest in First Nation infrastructure, economic development, and continued investments in health and social programs for community well-being.

"First Nation students are struggling with remote learning because of a lack of access broadband connectivity, and there are further a lack of mental health and other support services combined with a significant drop in job prospects that impact children and youth. I'm pleased to see a strong government focus on youth employment by the additional investments in adult education, mental wellness, the Income Assistance Program, as well as additional investments in the Universal Broadband Fund."

Grand Chief Dumas added, “Budget 2021 and spending over the last year show that Canada has the resources to guide the country through a major emergency. It has spent approximately \$300 billion over the previous year on COVID-19 relief programs for all segments of Canadian society and for Canadian businesses. Budget 2021 commits a further \$101.4 billion to the fiscal stimulus recovery plan. First Nations in Manitoba, however, find difficulty reconciling the fact that there appear to be unlimited resources for guiding the country through a pandemic and restarting the economy, but little to nothing regarding funding to support First Nations due to the historical injustices faced for more than 150 years. First Nations citizens can see now that the financial resources are there, but the political will is not. We can all see now that if past governments applied the same pandemic resources and determination, the treaties were honoured and the wealth generated from First Nations’ lands and waters were shared equally, the dark chapters in Canada’s history and our social and economic injustices could have been addressed and solved a long time ago.”

“Close to a quarter of all First Nations in this country live within the treaty territories in Manitoba, and we expect these historic investments to reflect that proportion. It would be even better if the government just got out of the way and transferred our funding directly. First Nations in Manitoba remain steadfast on their position on transformation and self-determination: we have the capacity and wherewithal; we need governments and bureaucracies to simply get out of the way, transfer First Nations funding directly to First Nations under a renewed fiscal transfer agreement so that we can direct our destinies as self-determining peoples as originally agreed to and understood by the ancestors and the Crown,” concluded Grand Chief Arlen 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 / Inineew (Cree), Anishinew (Ojibwe-Cree), Denesuline (Dene) and Dakota Oyate (Dakota) people.