



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The AMC opposes the Province's decision to ignore First Nations' approaches to broadband

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) expresses disappointment with the Province of Manitoba's latest announcement on broadband services and fully opposes any approach that continues to ignore and disrespect First Nations' jurisdiction and the right to determine how they will obtain broadband Internet and cellular service.

On Thursday, May 13, 2021, Manitoba Premier Brian Pallister held a press conference to announce a memorandum of understanding with New Brunswick-based Xplornet Communications to provide rural and remote communities with Internet and cellphone service, including a stated 30 First Nations.

AMC Grand Chief Arlen Dumas stated, "Internet connectivity for all First Nations is a top priority for First Nations leadership. This past year has made it clear that fast, reliable and affordable access to the Internet for all First Nations has become paramount given the difficulty with various stay-at-home health orders of First Nations and the Province of Manitoba. The AMC Chiefs-in-Assembly has passed resolutions supporting a First Nation solutions. The Chiefs-in-Assembly also supports the self-determination of all First Nations and any individual approaches taken by First Nations. Sadly, the Province has chosen to ignore First Nations."

"In addition to ignoring the AMC and First Nations leadership, from information my office has received, the Province has continued to breach its duty to consult with the 30 First Nations it referred to in its announcement. This runs from finding out what their exact connectivity needs are, identifying rights of access to First Nations, and providing First Nations with detailed information about the MOU and use of the Manitoba Hydro fibre-optic cable network."

"Manitoba's decision to give an out-of-province company a clear economic development opportunity that could benefit those in Manitoba is a concern for the AMC. My office has sought to meet with the Province to discuss economic development opportunities and how First Nations can benefit with ongoing infrastructure opportunities that included the installation of broadband services to all First Nations in Manitoba. The discussion also included the proposed sale of the Manitoba Hydro subsidiary Manitoba Hydro Telecom that has the fibre-optic cable, and identification of potential ways to go forward. We continue to look forward to those discussions."

"In the current reconciliation era, and in light of the province's own *Path to Reconciliation Act*, First Nations citizens should have been not just invited to this conversation, but leading it. I call on Premier Pallister to not sign the MOU until consultation with the 30 First Nations has taken place."

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