



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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AMC responds to Report 11 of the Auditor General of Canada: COVID-19 and Indigenous Communities

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) issues this statement in response to the May 25th, 2021 release of *Report 11 of the Auditor General of Canada: COVID-19 and Indigenous communities (2021)*. This audit focused on whether Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) provided sufficient personal protective equipment (PPE), nurses and paramedics to Indigenous communities and organizations in a coordinated and timely manner in order to protect Indigenous peoples against COVID-19.

Grand Chief Arlen Dumas stated, “Although the AMC was not invited to provide its perspective for Report 11, we welcome the findings and recommendations of the Auditor General. Overall, the AMC agrees with the Auditor General that this audit was important because without timely access to PPE and medical support, First Nations in Manitoba would be more susceptible to COVID-19. It is one of the reasons why the AMC partnered with other First Nation organizations to create a First Nations Pandemic Response and Coordination Team (PRCT) that could work with the federal government to ensure they heard first hand from First Nations what type of response and resources the communities required. The First Nation experts on the PRCT pushed hard and leveraged every contact they had to make sure our communities could respond to this crisis quickly to address outbreaks and keep COVID-19 numbers low”.

Report 11 noted that ISC adapted quickly to ensure that its PPE stockpile was replenished and managed effectively for the benefit of First Nations and their citizens in Manitoba, whether they reside on or off-reserve. The AMC notes that this was not done without a lot of meetings and discussions over the past 16 months.

“AMC and the PRCT lobbied hard for the expansion of access to the ISC PPE stockpile by First Nations who were supporting their citizens through the delivery of this equipment to their homes and through access to health services such as rapid COVID testing. However, had First Nations in Manitoba been engaged for Report 11, they may have learned the true extent of the contributions of the First Nations Leadership to protecting their Nations and keeping their citizens safe since the declaration of the state of emergency last March,” said Dumas. “Many of the 51 remote and isolated First Nations with nursing stations noted in Report 11 are located within Manitoba. Leadership needed ISC to work with them to address the ongoing shortage of health staff in their First Nation. Manitoba has the highest on-reserve population in the country and is the reason why ISC should be working with leadership to address the pandemic during and post epidemic. We agree that future emergencies will require these continued partnerships that we have created through the FNPRCT and between the department, First Nations and their affiliated and mandated organizations. The way we have worked over these last 16 months is an improvement over FNIHB’s short-sighted and tone deaf approach and response to First Nations in Manitoba during the H1N1 outbreak several years ago.”

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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.