



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 28, 2021

AMC stands in solidarity with the Swan Lake First Nation on its lawsuit against the government of Manitoba and the MLLC

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) stands in solidarity with the Swan Lake First Nation and all First Nations in Manitoba challenging abuses of power and illegal provincial intrusion into First Nations' exclusive jurisdiction.

On June 24, 2021, Swan Lake First Nation filed a statement of claim in the Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench against the government of Manitoba and the Manitoba Liquor and Lotteries Commission (MLLC) to protect its inherent and Treaty rights. It seeks financial and punitive damages in relation to its under-handed and dishonest gaming policy stemming from *The Smoking and Vapour Products Control Act* that received royal assent on May 20, 2021. This Act removes the exemption for lands reserved for Indians from Manitoba's legislation prohibiting smoking in indoor premises.

Grand Chief Arlen Dumas stated, "The AMC stands firmly with Chief Francine Meeches and the Swan Lake First Nation as they assert and exercise exclusive jurisdiction over all economic ventures and social programs within all their reserve lands. I commend Chief Meeches for taking this brave stand against this provincial government as it punitively and unilaterally leverages gaming site holder agreements in conjunction with Bill 56 to limit economic self-sufficiency and impact the rights and jurisdiction of the Swan Lake First Nation. Chiefs have formally declared their opposition to the infringement and have passed motions resoundingly rejecting all legislative measures and their associated policies. The AMC continues to condemn Bill 56 and all the numerous pieces of legislation that the Pallister government has introduced since being re-elected in 2019 without the free, prior and informed consent of First Nations and in violation of its own *Path to Reconciliation Act*."

Grand Chief Dumas added, "at the Manitoba Standing Committee hearing on Bill 56, the AMC expressed the will of the Chiefs and put the government on notice that there would be legal and, if necessary, constitutional challenges to their infringement of the Treaty and inherent rights of First Nations should they continue to overreach and abuse their authority as a majority government."

"First Nations have always said that this is not about the well-being and health of First Nations. It is about an unethical provincial government using a pandemic to expand its powers and regulate gaming on reserve. If it were about our well-being, then Manitoba would systemically address the disproportionate and negative health outcomes of First Nations in this province rather than using legal wrangling to infringe on First Nations' right to gaming in this province. We have seen many systems exploit the law and judiciary systems to uphold racist, colonial and white supremacy lies, so the AMC will continue to support First Nations leadership that initiate legal cases such as this one by Chief Francine Meeches and Swan Lake First Nation," concluded Grand Chief 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 / Ininew (Cree), Anishininew (Ojibwe-Cree), Denesuline (Dene) and Dakota Oyate (Dakota) people.