



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) Responds to Manitoba's Proposed Legislation to Reduce Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Youth

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) issues the following statement regarding the Province of Manitoba's decision to implement the *Hospitality Sector Customer Registry Act* to increase legal oversight in the hospitality sector over accommodations and transportation businesses. The act is to reduce the human trafficking and sexual exploitation of Manitoba youth.

"First Nations children and youth are targets of the sex trade at disparate rates in comparison to their non-First Nations peers, and there is a reason for that. Institutionalization via the child and family services system and justice system, combined with constant removal and re-placement creates incredible chaos in the lives of First Nations youth. This makes them vulnerable to dangerous people luring them into exploitation with promises of money and stability only to experience manipulation and various levels of abuse." stated AMC Acting Grand Chief Cornell McLean.

The *Hospitality Sector Customer Registry Act* would require ride services and hotels to report suspicious activity that may be related to human trafficking to police, and to require more stringent details from passengers to provide an avenue by which police can follow up on potential cases of sexual exploitation as most of these issues operate behind closed doors in temporary accommodations and via vehicle-for-hire transportation.

"We hope that with such legislation, it does not become an excuse to increase policing of First Nations children and youth and that the focus lies on the individuals and systems that create these violent conditions that harm our families. First Nations children and youth, particularly those in care, are vulnerable and perpetrators see them as targets – that is why we advocate so fiercely for keeping First Nations children close to home, with their families and Nations," stated the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Regional Chief Woodhouse.

The AMC continues to be a strong advocate for a First Nations-led, empowerment-focused prevention strategy to support First Nations survivors of human trafficking, reclaim their place within the sacred circle, and develop tools to support education and community-based protection plans.

In addition, in January 2021, the AMC called upon the federal government to work with the AMC Women's Council to ensure First Nations are involved at all levels of planning to implement the Calls-for-Justice in *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into MMIWG*. The report further includes Calls-for-Justice for all levels of government, including provincial, to consult with First Nations on matters which impact their well-being. In this case, the *Hospitality Sector Customer Registry Act* proposed by Manitoba's government.

"To protect the safety of the most vulnerable people in society, First Nations children; it requires coordination across all levels of government while ensuring First Nations have a voice when decisions

are being made on our behalf. We have all these systems policing First Nations families, and yet it's the condition of being institutionalized on various levels which exacerbates the likelihood of this violence," concluded Acting Grand Chief McLean.

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For more information, please contact:

Communications Team
Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
Email: media@manitobachiefs.com

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.