



Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
EMPOWERING OUR NATIONS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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AMC commends Finance Minister Freeland on the 2022 Federal Budget

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) issues this statement in response to the release of *Federal Budget 2022: A Plan to Grow Our Economy and Make Life More Affordable* (Budget 2022).

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, delivered Budget 2022 to Parliament and the rest of Canada today. The AMC applauds the government for its overall fiscal plan as well as for its commitments to moving forward with Reconciliation.

“I start by acknowledging that First Nations in Manitoba, with the combined efforts of the AMC, the Southern Chiefs Organization (SCO), the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Inc. (MKO) and the Assembly of First Nations Manitoba Region (AFN) created the first *Manitoba First Nations Alternative Budget 2022* and tabled this document in Ottawa prior to Budget 2022 to ensure First Nation voices were heard,” AMC Acting Grand Chief Eric Redhead stated. “I commend each organization for completing this important work. Our organizations will continue to use this to facilitate work with Canada to co-develop a budget that leads to economic and social development outcomes for healthier and sustainable economies, Nations, families, and citizens of all First Nations in Manitoba.”

“While we recognize and acknowledge the areas that the current federal government has committed funding to, the AMC will continue to review how Budget 2022 impacts First Nations in Manitoba.” Acting Grand Chief Eric Redhead continued, “The rate of inflation is the highest in decades, and our northern and remote First Nations in Manitoba are suffering from these rising costs. And the fact that we had been badly underfunded for 19 years due to a 2 per cent funding cap that was only lifted back in 2016, we need consistent and significant catch-up funding to change the social and economic situation in our First Nations.”

Since Canada has passed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (UNDRIP), and committed to Reconciliation, the AMC recognizes the need for an alternative budget process that respects the implementation of UNDRIP, and the needs of First Nations in Manitoba.

“It is challenging to say what we will get here in Manitoba because of how the budget is laid out. These budget plans often say, ‘over three years’, ‘over five years.’ A multi-year budget, generically identified for “Indigenous” or for First Nations is hard to decipher how it will benefit First Nations in Manitoba. If Trudeau’s government was sincere in advancing Reconciliation, then they would support and show a desire for immediate change and make immediate needs-based investments immediately – and not spread out over years. This is compounded by the fact that previous budget commitments and spending announcements for Manitoba First Nations were impacted by COVID-19,” stated Acting Grand Chief Redhead.



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Housing

In March of this year, Indigenous Services Canada Minister Hadju tabled an ambitious funding request for First Nation housing to the finance minister. Housing on reserve is reaching a state of crisis. The waiting lists for housing are long, and overcrowding causes a massive strain on families, particularly during these last two years of the pandemic when families were forced to stay home and/or isolate.

The Assembly of First Nations has estimated an approximately \$60 billion gap to address the housing shortage on reserve.

The government plans on investing in a new Tax-Free First Home Saving Account that will allow Canadians to save up to \$40,000 toward their first home; \$4 billion to help cities update their zoning systems to speed up construction; \$1 billion for the construction of affordable homes and \$1.5 billion in loans and funding for co-op housing. These amounts do not come with the number of housing units to be created under these announcements.

“First Nations in Manitoba face a serious ongoing housing crisis. We know the connection between First Nations’ access to housing and their overall health and wellness. The solutions identified in the budget still require monies that are First Nation citizens do not have. Co-op housing members purchase equity shares in the co-op and collectively become owners of the building and property.” States Acting Grand Chief Eric Redhead, “While Canadians are feeling the pinch on affordable homes in Canada, it is nothing compared to the lack of acceptable and available housing on reserve. We welcome Canada’s investment of \$4 billion over seven years in direct investments in housing for First Nations, however, First Nations are in such a dire housing crisis that it simply is not enough. Canada is about 1.8 million homes short of the G7 average. We are disappointed in today’s funding for our on-reserve citizens and their critical housing needs.”

AFN Regional Chief Cindy Woodhouse adds, “I am pleased to see the specific investment into First Nations housing, however I hope to see further investment from Canada, as previous Federal governments had left these types of funding out of budgets altogether. First Nations are long overdue for more robust and aggressive housing solutions on reserve. \$4 billion over seven years is a good start, but more is required to meet prior commitments.”

Residential Schools

“We are happy to see a budget commitment to Reconciliation, specifically to address past harms and discrimination. Budget 2022 proposes to provide various funding to begin the difficult work of healing for First Nation citizens,” said Acting Grand Chief Redhead.

- \$209.8 million over five years, to Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada to increase the support provided to communities to document, locate, and memorialize burial sites at former residential schools; to support the operations of and a new building for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation; and to ensure the complete disclosure of federal documents related to residential schools.
- \$10.4 million over two years, starting in 2022-23, to Justice Canada to support the appointment of a Special Interlocutor who will work collaboratively with Indigenous peoples and make recommendations for changes to strengthen federal laws and practices to protect and preserve unmarked burial sites;



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- \$5.1 million over five years, starting in 2022-23, to Public Safety Canada to ensure the Royal Canadian Mounted Police can support community-led responses to unmarked burial sites;
- \$25 million over three years, starting in 2022-23, to Library and Archives Canada to support the digitization of millions of documents relating to the federal Indian Day School System;
- \$25 million over three years, starting in 2022-23, to Parks Canada to support the commemoration and memorialization of former residential school sites.

“While I appreciate the federal government’s efforts in identifying reconciliation and self-determination in the latest budget and support those plans, I remind the Prime Minister and his government, that First Nations in Manitoba already know what is needed. Our past leaders left us a road map in *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows* along with the numerous studies and reports that have been done. It is time for all funding dollars to go straight to First Nations instead of being divvied out through transfer payments to the provincial government that do not benefit or service First Nations and their citizens.” States Acting Grand Chief Eric Redhead.

“This type of financial commitment needs to be permanent and part of every federal budget going forward, increasing each year to ensure Reconciliation is a pivotal centerpiece to every government, regardless of political stripe.” Continues Acting Grand Chief Eric Redhead, “Reconciliation is not a partisan topic and therefore needs to serve as an ever-increasing fixture and priority within each budget Canada delivers in the future.”

Education

The AMC was looking forward to an announcement on a post-secondary strategy with sufficient and long-term funding for First Nation students who have successfully graduated high school and desire to go on to trades, university, college, etc. The Treaty right to education does not end at the reserve boundary.

The media has reported that there are 200,000 job vacancies in the IT sector. There are 80,000 vacancies in the manufacturing industry, which means a slowdown in production because they cannot find the workers. Over the last two years, the cost of this supply chain disruption has been approximately \$10 Billion.

“Investing in the First Nations workforce continues to be very important to the AMC. Manitoba has the largest share of First Nations people in Canada. It is estimated that by 2036, the Indigenous population is forecast to reach between 275,000 and 335,000 people representing between 18 and 21% of the provincial population. There is a definite economic impact of enhanced First Nation labour participation.

Climate Change

“We welcome the announcement of funding to address climate change. First Nations are the hardest hit by natural disasters resulting from climate change. First Nations in Manitoba are evacuated almost every year due to flooding and forest fires.” States Acting Grand Chief Eric Redhead, “We need to ensure that First Nations people and our Knowledge Keepers are at the forefront of any action that addresses the impact of climate change.”



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Mental Health and Wellness

“We are pleased funding has been identified that will provide for trauma-informed and culturally appropriate First Nations services and mental health and wellness strategies. Funding for these services should be provided as soon as possible for First Nations in Manitoba as this is a critical issue that has been compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic.”

“To conclude, I want to add that close to a quarter of all First Nations in this country live within the treaty territories in Manitoba. The First Nations represented by members of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, have always and will always be steadfast on their position on transformation and self-determination.” concluded Acting Grand Chief Redhead, “The AMC is also committed to advocating for all issues that the Manitoba Chiefs call attention to. Our goal is to empower and strengthen Manitoba First Nations to the point of self-sufficiency and autonomous sovereignty.”

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For more information, please contact:

Stacia Franz
Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
Email: sfranz@manitobachiefs.com
Phone: 204-292-1504

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.