



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 24, 2022

The AMC and AFN Manitoba Respond to Court Ruling on Inadequate Engagement with First Nations on Flood-Prevention Project

Treaty One Territory, Manitoba – The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) and the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) Manitoba Regional Office release this statement in response to a recent court decision that the Province of Manitoba did not adequately consult First Nations near Lake St. Martin on The Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin Outlet Channels project.

In 2019, the Manitoba Government issued a right-of-way permit on Crown land for engineers to perform groundwater monitoring and other activities. However, the engineers on this project only spoke with two of the six First Nations in the region and, in those underrepresented discussions, also failed to disclose their work plans adequately. In addition, the province had begun tree clearing without notifying First Nations. As such, Chief Justice Glenn Joyal of the Court of Queen's Bench ruled that the engineers did not communicate with the First Nations in any clear or meaningful way.

AMC Acting Grand Chief Cornell McLean said, "It is no surprise to the AMC that the Government of Manitoba has not lived up to their constitutional duty to consult concerning this channel project. In this era of reconciliation, it is no longer acceptable for any government to conduct assessments and grant approval for infrastructure construction without First Nations' engagement. First Nations need to be full participants as it relates to the discussion on the potential environmental effects of the project and any proposed measures. First Nations are equipped with first-hand and traditional knowledge vital to preventing or mitigating environmental damage."

In 2019 the AMC proposed a work plan for a collaborative process on engagement with First Nations regarding the Lake Manitoba and Lake St. Martin Outlet Channels project. The AMC outlined that project-related engagement includes the Indigenous and Public Engagement Program (IPEP) for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Crown consultation processes.

In 2011, Lake St Martin experienced extreme flooding, resulting in its citizens' traumatic displacement. This event validates the importance of this collaborative process regarding proper engagement with First Nations. Unfortunately, First Nations are most affected by environmental infrastructure projects, historically suffering the effects of inadequate engagement with changes to the traditional use of lands and resources, changes to the biophysical environment, and effects on fish and fish habitat, vegetation, and wildlife resources. AMC outlined in specific detail what the steps for adequate engagement are, and it is disappointing that in this instance it did not happen.

"The AFN Manitoba Regional Office stands beside First Nations to ensure that environmental stewardship is front and center in the construction of the Lake Manitoba and Lake St Martin Outlet

Channels project. The duty to consult and accommodate requires First Nation-based meetings and dialogue. This project is being stalled because of these inadequate engagement processes, which is unacceptable. I urge Manitoba to do what is right and engage with leadership on a nation-to-nation basis. Emails are not engagement," AFN Regional Chief Cindy Woodhouse said.

"We will continue to work alongside First Nations to ensure those impacted by this project have full economic participation in the construction of infrastructure that will benefit First Nations and all Manitobans in the long run," concluded AMC Acting Grand Chief Cornell McLean.

-30-

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