



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **THE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA CHIEFS ACKNOWLEDGES THE COURAGE OF THE WOMEN WHO CHALLENGED CITY HALL ON CODE OF CONDUCT**

**Treaty One Territory, Manitoba** - The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) wants to acknowledge the women who spoke against the City of Winnipeg's Councillor Markus Chambers and Councillor Jeff Browaty's motion to remove the Code of Conduct from the Vehicle-for-Hire by-law that would fine drivers for any inappropriate behaviour.

"Yesterday, several First Nations women shared their horrific experience with the taxicab services. This showed great strength and courage as they spoke against the proposed motion to eliminate accountability of taxi drivers. It is not easy to share your experience, and to open wounds that have been hidden for a long time. I commend these women for their leadership and inspiration for others," stated Chief Betsy Kennedy, War Lake First Nations, and Chair of the AMC's Women Council.

Specifically, Councillor Chambers and Councillor Browaty passed a motion to delete sections 9(2) and 18 (4) of the Vehicle for Hire which state:

*The driver of a vehicle for hire must comply with the code of Conduct, maintain a high level of decorum, and refrain from conduct that may reasonably be considered inappropriate or unbecoming for a service provider in the vehicle vehicle-for-hire industry. Without limitation, the driver must not:*

- (a) Sexually harass a passenger or make lewd remarks to a passenger*
- (b) Insult, abuse, intimidate or threaten a passenger;*
- (c) Ask a passenger for a tip or gratuity, whether directly or indicate that one is expected or required;*
- (d) Fail to release a passenger from the vehicle at the passenger's request; or*
- (e) Subject to subsection 59(1) (pre-payment), accept, request a passenger to provide, collateral as security for the payment of a fare.*

"It is quite disappointing that this motion is up for debate when it should have automatically been passed and not delayed. Having a Code of Conduct provides the bare minimum standard on how taxi drivers are to treat First Nations passengers. In an era of Reconciliation, we should be able to trust and have confidence in City Councillors to put the safety and security of First Nations first and foremost. Despite having so much controversy regarding the behaviour and conduct of the taxi drivers, we still see the interest of the taxi industry being prioritized," stated Chief Betsy Kennedy.

After hearing from more than 15 speakers against Councillor Chambers and Councillor Browaty's motion to delete the Code of Conduct from Vehicle for Hire drivers, the Councillors decided to keep the Vehicle for Hire Bylaw as it was originally written with the Code of Conduct.

“I believe the City Councillors finally heard our voices yesterday. It was an emotional day as we heard experiences from First Nations women who shared their stories, for some as far back as 1980s. This is not a stand-alone issue. It is an issue that has been happening for generations. I want to believe that people who are in positions, to make decisions, will do the right thing. The City of Winnipeg is ground zero for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and we should have representatives to make it a priority to protect our women,” stated Cora Morgan, First Nations Family Advocate.

In 2017, the City of Winnipeg committed to setting in motion a reconciliation process to reconcile the differences and the wrongs experienced by First Nations people through the signing of Winnipeg’s Indigenous Accord. After the release of *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*, the City of Winnipeg committed to supporting the MMIWG Calls for Justice through the City’s Indigenous Accord.

“As First Nations, we need to find solutions to these systematic issues that affect our people. In doing so, the AMC has been provided the mandate to work with Ikwe Safe Rides on creating a safe alternative to the monopoly of the taxi service industry,” concluded Chief Kennedy, Chair of the AMC Women’s Council.

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