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FSIN AND AFN EXPECT INCLUSION IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S DISCUSSION ON HEALTHCARE TRANSFER DOLLARS TO THE PROVINCES

Treaty 6 Territory, Saskatoon SK – Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has invited the premiers of Canada and the territorial leaders to a meeting to discuss health care transfer funding and excluded First Nations government. The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) and the Assembly of First Nations are dismayed by the tactic.

“Before the settlers arrived and governments were formed, our leaders signed Treaties with the Crown, giving First Nations the Treaty right to healthcare in the medicine chest provision. Our people and their government were here before the provincial borders were even formed. We must honour Treaties in government processes today,” said FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron.

Canada’s premiers recently asked the federal government to increase the Canada Health Transfer payment to the provinces from 22 per cent to 35 per cent. First Nations leaders are requesting inclusion in management decisions for their proportionate share of healthcare funding in order to improve access to care and the quality of care for First Nations people.

“There is no reconciliation for First Nations when we continue to be excluded from these crucial discussions and decision-making processes. The provincial governments use First Nations populations to secure funding and when it trickles down, we are not treated properly in the provincial health care system. Our people don’t have access to services and care the same as non-First Nations. We expect and demand to be at the table every step of the way from beginning to end. And that’s what our people ask of us as FN leaders to continue to promote and ensure the implementation of our inherent rights and Treaty rights,” said Chief Cameron.

The Treaties include healthcare and those rights are protected under Section 92 (7) of the Constitution Act and the Canada Health Act, however, the provision of primary healthcare is mainly left to the provinces which are underfunding First Nations communities and neglecting many First Nations people.

“We have gathered many accounts of First Nations not being treated equally by healthcare workers in the provincial healthcare system. They face racism from doctors and nurses and are pushed to the back of the line. There is so much of it the province has had to create a First

Nations Health Ombudsman. Our right to self-determination needs to be taken seriously by the government and we need a seat at the table to ensure our people have equal access to health care and are treated fairly in the system. We want our health care management transitioned to First Nations,” said FSIN Vice Chief David Pratt.

FSIN has documented cases that demonstrate how the lack of access to services has caused hardship among First Nations people. A larger proportion of First Nations people live with long-term disabilities and illnesses and continue to suffer without adequate care. Many First Nations communities in the province are still without health centres, leaving many First Nations people unable to access emergency care, a family physician, care for elders and mental health services.

FSIN leaders say the implementation of more user-pay healthcare services is perpetuating a two-tiered healthcare system that is inaccessible to many First Nations who live in poverty and have lower household incomes in comparison to the general population.

About FSIN

The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations represents 74 First Nations in Saskatchewan. The Federation is committed to honouring the spirit and intent of the Treaties, as well as the promotion, protection and implementation of the Treaty promises that were made more than a century ago.

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