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FIRST NATIONS AFFIRMS TREATY RIGHTS TRUMP PROVINCIAL FIREARMS LAWS

Treaty 6 Territory, Saskatoon SK – The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN), under the direction of the Chiefs, is opposing the provincial government’s Bill 177, *The Saskatchewan Firearms Act*. The proposed legislation was introduced without consultation and does not include provisions or exemptions for First Nations Treaty rights and sustenance gathering.

“We know our inherent Treaties trump provincial laws. The introduction of Bill 117, *The Saskatchewan Firearms Act*, does not include exemptions for First Nations’ inherent and Treaty right to hunt, fish, trap and gather. This right is fundamental to the assurances that were made to First Nations under Treaty and we will protect our Treaties to the fullest extent. When our Treaty people are on the land gathering sustenance, provincial and federal gun legislation or any other regulations do not apply,” said FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron.

Bill 177, *The Saskatchewan Firearms Act* was introduced December 1, 2022 and has gone through its first reading in the legislature. The act was formed after the federal government proposed amendments to Bill C-2 in an attempt to ban semi-automatic weapons including some guns commonly used for hunting. The province says the *Saskatchewan Firearms Act* was introduced to protect the rights of lawful firearms owners, however, First Nations chiefs say it overlooks the need for provisions to protect the inherent Treaty rights enshrined with the Crown to First Nations over a century ago.

“We call on the provincial and federal government to engage in meaningful discussion with First Nations instead of creating more laws to harass and criminalize First Nations while they hunt, fish, trap and gather. We stand behind First Nations who have been unlawfully removed from the land or had their guns and equipment confiscated and we will continue to do so until our rights are recognized,” said Chief Cameron.

FSIN Executive says one of the most intrusive laws impacting Treaty sustenance hunting and gathering is the requirement of a Possession and Acquisition License (PAL). FSIN is aware of many First Nations that have been brought before the courts for their lack of paperwork even though Treaty rights were established long before PAL.

“When guns are confiscated from our Treaty sustenance hunters, it takes away our Nations’ ability to pass down valuable knowledge to our younger generations and impacts our ability to feed our less fortunate, such as our elders and single mothers. Our Nations’ citizens will be unjustly targeted with

any new legislation because of systemic racism. The province must recognize that any new legislation related to firearms has the potential to do real harm to our Nations, and so we strongly urge the government to ensure that robust engagement and consultation when it comes to legislation on firearms,” said FSIN Vice Chief Heather Bear. “Our children are taught from an early age that a gun is a tool. Elders, family and community members teach gun safety, conservation and respect for wildlife.”

About FSIN

The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations represents 73 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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