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## **Southern Chiefs' Organization Welcomes \$650 Million Funding for Indigenous COVID-19 Emergency Relief**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: May 29, 2020 — ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB** — Grand Chief Jerry Daniels of Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) welcomes today's funding announcement by federal Indigenous Services Minister Marc Miller. The \$650 million announced today will help Indigenous communities cope with the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare for a second wave of infection, anticipated this fall.

Grand Chief Jerry Daniels states, "We will be watching how this announcement and new funding addresses the needs we see in our southern communities. This is a critical time for all of us, especially those who are living in poverty and in situations involving domestic violence."

The \$650 million announcement comes in addition to previous announcements of \$305. The new funding includes:

- \$285 million to support rapid public health responses in Indigenous communities when faced with an outbreak
- \$270 million increase to the on-reserve income assistance program
- \$40.8 million over five years to build 10 shelters in First Nations communities and two in the territories to help women and children fleeing violence

"The funding for shelters is timely, just days away from the one year anniversary of final report and Calls for Justice delivered by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls," Grand Chief Daniel noted. "However, I am concerned that there are more than 630 First Nation communities, and only 46 federally funded shelters on-reserve. The commitment to build 10 more shelters begins to address the gap, but still leaves more than 575 communities in need."

The Southern Chiefs' Organization represents 34 First Nations in what is now called southern Manitoba. SCO is an independent political organization that protects, preserves, promotes, and enhances First Nations peoples' inherent rights, languages, customs, and traditions through the application and implementation of the spirit and intent of the Treaty-making process.

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