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SCO APPALLED BY COMMENTS MADE BY PALLISTER'S NEW PICK TO LEAD INDIGENOUS RELATIONS

A Day One Disaster – Grand Chief Daniels

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ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB — The Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) is appalled by the comments made today by Dr. Alan Lagimodiere, the newly appointed minister of Indigenous reconciliation and northern relations. He takes over a renamed version of the department of Indigenous and northern relations, formerly led by Agassiz MLA Eileen Clarke, who resigned last week.

"It didn't take long for the new minister to show where his true loyalties lie," said SCO Grand Chief Daniels. "It only goes to show, that this premier and his dwindling base of followers are beyond out of touch and have no business being in charge of any departments that involve reconciliation with First Nations.

Following his swearing-in ceremony, Lagimodiere stated at a press conference that the people who were responsible for colonization and the residential school system, "really did believe they were doing the right thing at the time" and that "(t)he residential-school system was designed to take Indigenous children and give them the skills and abilities they would need to fit into society as it moved forward". Lagimodiere is himself Métis but has had difficult relationships with Métis leadership in the past.

"It's one thing to hear that kind of rhetoric coming from the mouth of a colonist sympathizer such as Brian Pallister," continued Grand Chief Daniels. "However, to hear this come from a man who has Indigenous roots himself is particularly heartbreaking. His own descendants would have been subjected to the horrors of day schools and the Sixties Scoop. The current provincial administration is obviously awash in racial bias and is beholden to a leader with an innate dislike for First Nation people."

Meanwhile, Lagimodiere's predecessor unveiled more in a statement today about why she stepped down from the Pallister cabinet. Eileen Clarke revealed that her attempts to build trust with First Nation leadership were not supported by the provincial administration. Her admonition of the current premier continued when she said that strong leadership is required to heal and bring our province and country together in harmony, and that it cannot be done by one individual. Inappropriate words and actions can be very damaging.

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Ms. Clarke was responding to comments made by the premier about the “positive aspects” of colonization. Lagimodiere was just minutes into his new position, when he made similarly abhorrent observations about the darkest time in Canadian history, one with ongoing impacts today.

“I understand that the new minister has already released a statement claiming to have “misspoke” when asked about residential schools,” concluded Grand Chief Daniels. “I can state emphatically that his statement is not enough. We expect a full explanation of how he could utter such dangerous statements as well as a full retraction of his previous comments and an apology to all First Nations and Indigenous peoples, otherwise, we can not be supportive of this new minister. We also continue to wait for an apology from the premier for his similarly egregious statements made last week. We know how important it is to work collaboratively with Treaty partners, but we cannot tolerate this way of thinking any longer.”

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The Southern Chiefs' Organization represents 34 Anishinaabe and Dakota Nations and more than 80,000 citizens 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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