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SCO STATEMENT ON PALLISTER APOLOGY

Hollow words mean there is nothing left to do but resign – Grand Chief Daniels

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 4, 2021

ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB — The Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) does not accept the apology of Manitoba premier Brian Pallister.

“Too many times, this premier has shown his disdain for First Nation people and our constitutional, Inherent, and Treaty rights,” stated SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. “For him to now try and sweep his dangerous rhetoric under the rug does nothing to heal the wounds he has created.”

Pallister stated at a press conference yesterday that he “feels awful for the reaction and the misunderstanding” his widely condemned remarks on Canadian history have caused.

In July, the premier said colonizers “didn't come here to destroy anything, they came here to build.” He went on to stand by those comments for days and weeks afterwards. His sentiments were also parroted by his newly minted Minister of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Affairs, Dr. Alan Lagimodiere, just days later.

“This really is a case of far too little, far too late,” continued Grand Chief Daniels. “Coming from this man, these words ring hollow, and they do nothing to advance our goal of meaningful systemic change and reconciliation. I’m afraid this premier has gone too far down the racist rabbit hole, and there is only one viable option to show he is truly sorry; and that is to resign immediately.”

Today’s feeble attempt at mending fences follows a long list of verbal blunders by the premier. Those include, but are not limited to, saying that night hunting issues in Manitoba would lead to a “race war,” and that putting Indigenous people first for COVID-19 vaccines would leave the province in a precarious place when it came to the allocation of doses. Add to that, ongoing disputes between the province and First Nations over gaming jurisdiction, flood mitigation, and resource development, among many other issues, and there is a legacy of racism and innate bias against First Nation peoples.

“Enough is enough,” concluded Grand Chief Daniels. “I do not for a moment, believe that this premier is now extending an olive branch to First Nations or any Indigenous peoples. I know for certain, the longer he clings to power, the more damage he will do to relations between ourselves and our provincial Treaty partner. I cannot accept that, nor can I accept his apology.”

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The Southern Chiefs' Organization represents 34 First 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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