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SCO Response to 2022 Federal Budget

The time has come for full implementation of promises and policies that impact First Peoples – Grand Chief Daniels

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ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB — The Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) is responding to the latest federal budget, tabled April 7, 2022.

Of utmost importance to southern First Nations in Manitoba, is a commitment to improving housing outcomes for First Nation communities and people. The Trudeau Liberals promised \$4 billion over seven years to improve and expand housing for Indigenous Peoples. That includes \$2.4 billion over five years to support First Nations housing on reserve and \$565 million over five years to support housing in First Nations Self Governing and Modern Treaty Holder communities.

“All of our knowledge, and all of our metrics point towards a growth in demand and need for housing in our communities and for people living off-reserve,” stated SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. “I am pleased to see our federal treaty partner acknowledge this in the budget, and my hope now is that we can move to self-determination and First Nation control of infrastructure, so that we can create high quality infrastructure developments for our people and our communities, both on and off reserve.”

SCO was also heartened to see an additional \$300 million that will be invested over five years to co-develop and launch an Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing strategy.

SCO is also responding favorably to the promise of \$270 million over six years to assist in the ongoing searches of former residential school sites. As part of that, \$209 million is earmarked to help communities document, locate, and memorialize burial sites at former residential schools, along with building a new National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, and ensuring complete disclosure of federal documents related to residential schools.

“This funding is welcome news as my community continues to investigate and search the site of the former Fort Alexander Indian Residential School,” said Sagkeeng Anicinabe First Nation Chief, Derrick Henderson. “If we can bring some closure to this dark chapter in our people’s history, then we can really start to deal with the intergenerational trauma that we have had to endure due to Residential Schools.”

SCO is also welcoming further support in the battle against COVID-19. The global pandemic continues to have unprecedented financial and health impacts on southern First Nations. The Trudeau government is allocating \$268 million to improve the delivery of health services for First Nations.

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“Any assistance that leads to better health outcomes for our people and brings us closer to our goal of creating a southern First Nations health governance structure that is representative of, and accountable to First Nation communities is very welcome,” said Grand Chief Daniels. “Our people continue to face disproportionate threats from COVID-19 and we need to keep pushing for trauma-informed, culturally-appropriate, First Nation-led services that will help us emerge even more resilient when the pandemic eventually subsides. We also need to understand and be vigilant to learn the potential long-term effects of COVID-19.”

The news of universal dental care for children under the age of 12, families with an income of less than \$90,000, and no co-pays for families who make under \$70,000 per year is also welcome.

Notably, there is an absence of the previously announced \$40 billion child welfare settlement agreement and the projected \$8 billion payout as part of a class-action suit regarding long-term, on-reserve boil water advisories. There was also no mention of measures to address the calls to action outlined in the final report of the National Inquiry on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

“I am aware of the government’s need to prioritize its fiscal commitments after more than two years of the pandemic, and other geo-political events that are affecting the cost of living for all Canadians,” concluded Grand Chief Daniels. “I look forward to working with our treaty partners in the areas outlined within the recent federal budget while continuing our advocacy and addressing the priorities of southern First Nations.”

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The Southern Chiefs’ Organization represents 34 First Nations and more than 81,000 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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