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## **SCO RESPONSE TO MANITOBA BUDGET 2022**

### **To Truly Recover Together, Promises Must Translate to Responsible Action – Grand Chief Daniels**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 13, 2022**

**ANISHINAABE AND DAKOTA TERRITORY, MB** — The Southern Chiefs' Organization (SCO) is responding to the latest provincial budget, tabled April 12, 2022. The "Recover Together" budget included five pillars, beginning with health care.

"All Manitobans have witnessed the devastating effects of a strained health care system during the COVID-19 pandemic," said SCO Grand Chief Jerry Daniels. "I am pleased to see investments in expanded ICU capacity, mental health and wellness, and the training of additional nurses, however prioritizing First Nation nursing students to create a more representative workforce is essential. Whether a modest 1.6 per cent increase in health care spending will address issues including the backlog of surgeries remains to be seen."

A critical step for the province will be working with First Nations to ensure an end to systemic racism in Manitoba's health care system and working with First Nations as an equal partner in health care delivery. This will reduce the 11 year and growing gap in life expectancy between First Nations and all others living in Manitoba.

SCO was heartened to see Treaty Land Entitlement (TLE) identified as a priority and expects to work collaboratively with its provincial Treaty partner to advance and expedite this work. "I believe TLE can be one of the most important and meaningful tools on our collective journey to reconciliation," said Grand Chief Daniels.

A new Indigenous Reconciliation Initiatives Fund includes \$5 million this year to advance progress on reconciliation as guided by the principles in Manitoba's *Path to Reconciliation Act*. The activities include: enhancing partnerships with Indigenous communities across sectors like health, education, business and industry, maintaining and strengthening connections with Indigenous cultures, languages and ways of life, building supportive and safe community networks that promote diversity including First Nation policing, addressing the harms left by the tragic legacy of residential schools, and decreasing knowledge gaps on the past and present experiences of Indigenous peoples.

Access to safe and affordable housing remains a crisis and top priority of First Nation leadership. The announcement that Rent Assist will be indexed to inflation will support some low-income Manitobans by increasing shelter benefits. A much anticipated expansion to eligibility for the Child Care Subsidy Program will make access to high quality child care a reality for First Nation families. Income support

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for people with severe and prolonged disabilities has long been a point of advocacy, and SCO will be monitoring to see how this and other commitments are implemented.

“The Chiefs of the southern First Nations will continue to hold our Treaty partner accountable on the commitments they make,” concluded Grand Chief Daniels. “But to truly recover from the pandemic, we need the province to invest in First Nation people and businesses, to end centuries of economic apartheid. Manitoba must also respect our Treaty rights and our right to self-determination, including gaming rights and respecting our right to harvest and hunt on our lands.”

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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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