



FSIN JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

www.fsin.ca

For immediate release: February 8th, 2022

FSIN URGES ALL FIRST NATIONS TO CONTINUE COVID PROTOCOLS

(Treaty 6 Territory, Saskatoon SK) – The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN), Yorkton Tribal Council (YTC), Prince Albert Grand Council (PAGC), Battlefords Agency Tribal Chiefs (BATC), and the Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC) are calling on the Provincial Government to reconsider terminating COVID-19 health mandates and protocols in Saskatchewan because it puts First Nations communities at greater risk. First Nations are one of the most vulnerable populations in the province and ending the public health protocols will only increase outbreaks and emergencies in our communities.

“It is premature for the province to end all restrictions as our First Nations vaccination rates are much lower than the provincial rates and an end to all restrictions will create added pressure to the community frontline workers and community resources,” says YTC Tribal Chief Isabel O’Soup. “It’s inevitable that there will be a surge in positive COVID-19 cases in our communities and it is unfortunate that the province is straying from the course to mitigate the impact of the highly contagious COVID variants. Our First Nations communities and organizations will continue to be diligent and implement our strategies for risk management and mitigation of this virus.”

“We consider COVID-19 a serious threat and we will follow the directives from the Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority. If there is any doubt about the threat of this virus, then we should err on the side of caution, not carelessness” says PAGC Grand Chief Brian Hardlotte. “We trust that our Medical Health Officer is monitoring the situation on a daily basis, and that he will determine changes depending on the best available evidence. At this time, we can not let our guards down and we will continue to practice all safety precautions as directed.”

“First Nations communities must remain vigilant and continue to follow all necessary COVID-19 health measures to ensure the overall safety of their communities and membership” says Neil Sasakamoose, Battleford Agency Tribal Chiefs. “Our frontline workers and health staff have been working tirelessly to maintain health and safety measures and we urge all nations to continue to support them and continue to follow any health mandates necessary for the protection of our people and communities.”

“Our northern communities have been some of the hardest hit in the province since the beginning of this pandemic” says MLTC Tribal Chief Richard Ben. “Ending or changing the public health measures without proper consultation from First Nations and their leadership is only going to create more outbreaks and put more pressure on our frontline health staff that have been working tirelessly for

almost two years straight. Our communities' health resources can't afford to take another hit or wave of COVID hospitalizations.”

“Our First Nations communities have been working around the clock to ensure the health and safety of our communities and schools. Reducing and eliminating COVID health protocols will only put our most vulnerable at risk all over again. We are not prepared to put the lives of our families at risk” says FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron. “Our fight against COVID-19 is not over, therefore, we will continue to follow all our safety measures and COVID protocols until this is over. It is not safe to ease any restrictions. Our First Nations communities are still currently at a greater risk than the rest of the province and we must keep them safe. We will continue to encourage our people to get vaccinated and eliminate infections in our communities completely.”

The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations represents 74 First Nations in Saskatchewan. The Federation is committed to honouring the spirit and intent of the Treaties, as well as the promotion, protection and implementation of the Treaty promises that were made more than a century ago.

-30-

For More Information or to coordinate interviews, please contact:

FSIN Communications

Larissa Burnouf

Cell: 306-291-6864

communications@fsin.com

larissa.burnouf@fsin.com