



## **Press Release**

### **CAP – Dismiss Discriminatory, Ineffective COVID Fines**

**June 29, 2020** (Ottawa, ON) – The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) calls on all Provincial Attorney Generals to dismiss charges and fines relating to COVID-19.

According to the "Policing the Pandemic" report released by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association on June 24, 2020, provincial government authorities ramped-up arbitrary law enforcement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In total, over \$13 million in fines were issued, disproportionately targeting Indigenous People, minority and racialized individuals across Canada. The Province of Quebec led the ticketing campaign, issues the highest number of tickets. British Columbia, in contrast, issued the least.

Fines targeted individuals for a range of behaviours such as using outdoor public spaces. These measures disproportionately affected vulnerable communities, the homeless, and families living in crowded housing. Further research has shown that the risk of transmission in outdoor spaces is low.

"These tickets amount to an ugly finance campaign run on racial profiling" says Kim Beaudin, CAP National Vice Chief. "Cities and provinces have created an unnecessary public order crisis on top of a public health crisis. Systemic racism in provinces, cities and police services makes them more than happy to slap minority communities with fines, like in Quebec where treaty and Section 35 rights are ignored. It is past time for cities and provinces to dismiss these fines and try to rebuild trust before it's too late."

Provinces across Canada issued emergency orders restricting activities such as use of public parks, and tied it in with penalties for violations ranging from hundreds to thousands of dollars. At the same time, public health measures such as drug coverage, emergency housing, and support for caregivers to children remain underfunded and insufficient. Ontario has received criticism for permitting workers who have tested positive for COVID-19 to remain on the job around coworkers in certain industries, such as agriculture, despite multiple agricultural workers already dying.

"With a possible second wave of COVID-19 coming, it will be Indigenous and marginalized people that will suffer the brunt of the pandemic. Provincial jails will be filled with indigenous people who cannot afford both the fines and extra charges added by Canadian police services" said Kim Beaudin. "Unaffordable fines and surcharges are part of the ongoing policy of overcharging Indigenous people, another failed step in reconciliation"

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*The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples is the national voice representing the interests of Métis, Status and non-Status Indians, and Southern Inuit Indigenous People living off-reserve. Today, over 80 per cent of Indigenous people live off-reserve.*