



Press Release

CAP: Feds Must Act, Stop Prisoners Dying from COVID-19 Outbreaks

Dec 3rd, 2020 (Ottawa, ON) –The Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP) calls on Federal Justice Minister David Lametti, Public Safety Minister Bill Blair, Indigenous Services Minister Marc Miller, and Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Carolyn Bennett to immediately intervene in the fight for survival by indigenous people in Saskatoon Correctional facility.

"Our people are now facing a death sentence in Saskatoon Correctional Centers due to Covid-19" says National Vice Chief Kim Beaudin. "These are lives being intentionally put at risk, and is nothing short of a genocidal, colonialist policy."

In 2016, the Supreme Court of Canada stated in *CAP-Daniels v. Canada* ruling that Indigenous people are a federal responsibility. That includes all Indigenous people under 91.24 of Canada's Constitution.

"It's time to honour the treaties and section 35 rights," added Beaudin. "134 years ago, on November 27 in Battleford Saskatchewan, the largest mass execution of Indigenous people in Canadian History was carried out. With 116 inmates already infected, the COVID-19 outbreak in Saskatoon Correctional facility could prove even deadlier for our people."

CAP Calls for the following to be enacted immediately:

- Release all inmates held for non-violent offences
- Immediate testing for COVID-19 for all inmates and staff
- Ensure any infected inmates are given separate living quarters from other inmates
- That Saskatchewan Minister of Public Safety resign immediately;

"Minister Tell has fumbled the ball in her role as Minister responsible to Saskatchewan Correctional facilities. This requires leadership with a level of foresight and compassion that is lacking in her public response to COVID-19" concluded Beaudin.

Earlier this year, in March 2020 the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples sent out a letter warning Provincial and Federal governments that the release of non-violent prisoners was necessary to prevent the kind of outbreak Saskatoon is now seeing. The lack of action on this letter, and failure to reduce over-crowding is directly responsible for this preventable crisis.

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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 70% of Indigenous people live off-reserve.