

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

2019

**Métis Nation-Saskatchewan
Constitutional Reform**

INTERIM REPORT

INTRODUCTION

A team led by Vice President Gerald Morin, the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) embarked on a province-wide consultation process seeking input from its citizens to reform the MN-S Constitution and related legislation. All 12 regions in Saskatchewan were visited to listen to citizens at the community level and receive their feedback on constitutional revisions and associated government reform advice. It was pointed out at the meetings that these regional visits is only the beginning of the process and there will be other opportunities for further input. Many of the regions offered diverse and often competing interests but it was clear that most citizens wanted their government to be accountable and transparent.

MANDATE

A motion was passed April 2019 at the Métis Nation Legislative Assembly (MNLA), mandating Vice President Morin, as the Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs and Governance, to undertake a consultation process on the revision and reformation of the MN-S Constitution.

PRELIMINARY SUMMARY OF CONSULTATIONS

The following will outline the themes that arose from the consultation meetings that occurred in September and October 2019. All comments and feedback have been coded and compiled into strands or themes to form this preliminary report. We valued meeting with the citizens of every region and will begin to interpret the feedback.

- 1. Representation of Women and Youth - MNLA**
 - Maximum two seats at the MNLA for women and youth, one seat each respectively and that these representatives to be elected province-wide via ballot box
 - Removal of the provision that women will be designated four seats at the MNLA
- 2. Preparation for MNLA**
 - Information for MNLA to be available in advance to allow for informed decision-making (e.g., receive MNLA binders at time of registration, new format of workshops prior to MNLA engages delegates to have their voices heard)
- 3. Clerk of MNLA**
 - Some mentioned that the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly should be independent of the PMC
- 4. MNLA Procedures or Processes**
 - Requirement to hold an MNLA at least twice each year to be contingent upon available financial resources
 - Require the Executive and PMC to submit written reports and updates for the benefit of the MNLA delegates as part of good governance
- 5. Appointment of Cabinet/Portfolios**
 - Formalize a process for the selection of Cabinet Ministers and/or portfolio positions from all elected representatives of MN-S to be assigned and recommended by the President and to be accepted by the PMC
- 6. Provincial Metis Council**
 - Prior to an election, all political candidates for the Executive and PMC, be required to submit a criminal record check, with their nomination papers confirming the support of five to seven community members
- 6.1 Reimbursements**
 - Issue of Ministers receiving fixed monthly stipends when serving as affiliate chairpersons
 - Issue of PMC members &/or Ministers receiving honorariums from other portfolios and affiliates over and

above their salaries

6.2 Do Not hold any other paid positions

- Elected Provincial Métis Council members and the President **shall not** hold paid positions with the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan or any of the Affiliate Boards

6.3 Code of Conduct

- Must implement an internal mechanism to enforce the Provincial Métis Council Code of Conduct and to deal with any non-compliance

7. Locals

- Require a detailed definition of Locals, including boundaries, roles, and population size

8. Executive

- Executive be comprised of only a President and Vice-President
- Specify that when a Regional Director is elected to the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan Executive, a replacement (Regional Director) for that region must be promptly selected by the region’s citizens
- Any vacancy on the MN-S Executive will be filled by election at the MNLA

8.1 Secretary

- The majority of citizens would like to see the removal of Secretary elected position from the Executive

8.2 Treasurer

- Recommendation to remove the Treasurer position from the Executive and to establish a Minister of Finance

8.3 Accountability

- Overwhelming feedback on transparency, integrity and ethics across the Executive and PMC is paramount; if there is a breach in integrity, there should be clearly defined consequences

9. Elections

- Strongly recommend including a provision that election candidates provide proof of Métis citizenship by providing their Métis citizen registration number and health card
- Review the Gabriel Dumont Institute’s formula for representation by population, as a potential formula for the PMC

10. Citizenship

- Replace “membership cards” with “citizenship cards”
- Consider changing the process to make it less onerous for citizens to obtain citizenship cards

11. Annual General Assembly

- Important to keep citizens informed at the General Assembly
- Repeal or amend ratification clause of the General Assembly to ratify amendments to the Constitution as this can be subject to political misuse by larger Locals and overrides the role of the MNLA

12. Affiliates

- All affiliates to come under the umbrella of the MN-S and identify clearer lines of reporting
- Requested to have all affiliates to **have** representation from the twelve Regions of MN-S, unless otherwise decided by the Métis Nation Legislative Assembly based upon the recommendations of the Provincial Métis Council

13. Senate

- Maintain a respectful ceremonial role of the Senate and as most of the members are Elders
- Establish terms of office and criteria for the Senate
- Providing a table for the Senate at the MNLA, to give Métis Citizens an opportunity to meet with them
- Providing Senators honorariums and funding for travel (including for travel companions) to attend the MNLA

14. Metis Independence

- the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan should consider removing the wording “as a third order of government” and replace with “Metis distinct order of government
- Repeal the ‘Grandfather Clause’ from the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan Citizenship Act

15. Inherent right to Self-Government

- The MN-S must consider opportunities to ensure the nation is self-sustaining in the future, such as, taxing our own citizens, developing companies and businesses to create profit and pursuing resource revenue sharing

16. Judicial

- If the Judicial Tribunal is established, one of its key roles will be to ensure that there are ramifications for unethical behaviour among elected representatives
- The Métis Nation should be more proactive in addressing the systematic oppression of the judicial system as not everyone deserves to go to jail; there are other alternative dispute mechanisms to help Métis citizens

17. Liability Issue

- Some local presidents were concerned about their liability for actions by MN-S

18. Urban Councils

- Remove or repeal Urban Councils from the Constitution

19. Land Claims

- Amend Northwest Saskatchewan Land Claims to allow provisions for hunting, harvesting and land claims in Métis Regions across the province of Saskatchewan

20. Metis Cultural Values & Languages

- Retaining our language, our Métis teachings, culture and passing on our history to the next generation

20.1 Elders

- It is important to recognize Elders and youth for their knowledge; many youths have knowledge around trapping and hunting, which was passed along to them by their Elders
- Revised legislation and distribution of funding allotments must be expedited, so Métis Elders can witness the changes taking place
- A provincial Elders Conference should be organized by the MN-S

20.2 Language

- At many gatherings, the Métis homeland is acknowledged but unmarked; it would be a historical event if we could reclaim our homeland names in our language

20.3 Values & Principles

- Appreciation and compassion should be shown for people with public duties
- Youth need to learn Métis traditional values, Focus on Youth empowerment and involvement so that they will understand who they are and where they come from

20.4 History

- Historical references should refer to oral and researched information
- Identity is important; children should know who their grandparents are and where they came from

20.5 Religion & Spirituality

- There is a difference between spirituality and religion; mixed feedback on whether religion should not be included in the Constitution

21. Protection of Metis Rights

- The collective Nation should have equal rights
- Protect and acknowledge our homelands and traditional hunting and gathering territories
- Reconciliation for our own nation, is important

NEXT STEPS

We will be submitting this Interim Report to the November 2019 MNLA and with some options on potential changes to the MN-S Constitutions or Legislation. We will also be consulted further at the November 2019 MNLA to get your opinion on the Interim Report to make sure we are on the right track before any constitutional and legislative changes are considered by the Métis Nation Legislative Assembly.

In early 2020, we plan on additional regional visits for specific proposed constitutional and legislative changes being considered.