



OFFICE of the PROVINCIAL PRESIDENT

March 3, 2020

To my fellow leaders of the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan:

On February 28-29, we held an important Métis Rights Conference in Saskatoon. Now more than ever it is important that we meet with and hear from our citizens and I was pleased to see over 400 people take the time to be part of these discussions. As we advance our self-government, we have an opportunity to finally ensure our rights are acknowledged, honoured and respected. This can only be realized if we are listening to our citizens and working to reflect their voices, their dreams and their lives in our efforts every day. I remain committed to doing just this. There were many important topics raised during our two-day discussion. I look forward to continuing the dialogue on protecting and advancing Métis rights in our land claim discussions, duty to consult and as part of our ongoing reform and strengthening of our Métis Nation government in Saskatchewan.

One issue that was raised by a concerned citizen and which we had an opportunity to talk about were the many unfounded claims being made out there with regards to our work with the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) and the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) to work together to try to advance self-government and demand increased transparency and accountability from the Métis National Council. I thought it was important to provide some further clarification on this issue so that our position is clear.

The main concern raised by the MMF and the National President is that in supporting the MNO and the MNA, we are turning away from the national definition of Métis and “opening the floodgates” to those in the east who would wrongly claim our identity. This is fearmongering designed to distract leaders and citizens from efforts to undermine our democracy and avoid accountability.

Our Provincial Métis Council members were present when we met with our counterparts from the MMF in Regina in October 2018 and agreed to advance this issue together as part of a Joint Cabinet Summit between MN-S and MMF. The MN-S supported the motion regarding the Métis that was put forward at the General Assembly of the Metis National Council (MNC) in December 2018. We supported the motion then and we still do now. As I have stated numerous times, there are significant issues that need to be considered and

discussed within the Métis Nation, including how we preserve and protect the integrity of our nation. This we agree on.

Where we found ourselves parting ways with our friends in Manitoba and the National President is on how this objective is achieved. We believe in governance and a fair process that follows rules we have all agreed to. We believe that *how* you do the right thing is a part of whether it is right or not. The actions of the National President and the President of the MMF show that they believe the ends justify the means. I cannot agree to or support this way of doing things.

The motion that was passed by the General Assembly was very clear that the matter was to be referred to the Board of Governors (BOG) prior to the next assembly sitting. It did not authorize the unilateral suspension or ejection of the MNO by the National President or anyone else. That power belongs to the Métis Nation General Assembly. When the National President moved to eject the MNO without any debate or consideration by the General Assembly, we tried to intervene and call a BOG meeting to discuss the issue. We wanted to work together to establish a path forward that would resolve the issue in a fair, transparent manner that respected the requirements of the motion, due process and the role and authority of the BOG and the Métis Nation General Assembly. The National President refused this request despite a legal and moral obligation on his part to make sure our governments could engage in respectful debate to resolve this in a manner that respects the views and wishes of our people.

There is a lot of misinformation out there. There are those that claim that the MNO is “opening the floodgates” and that if they are allowed to stand, then all of those who wrongly claim to be “Metis” in Quebec and the Atlantic provinces will suddenly be recognized by government. This is also simply not true and misrepresents the facts. The identification of historic voyageur communities in Ontario that are outside the Métis Nation Homeland is part of years of collaborative research between the Province of Ontario and the MNO to identify s.35 rights bearing communities. It is critical that we work with the MNO to resolve the matter of citizenship and that we find a way for the Metis Nation and these s.35 voyageur communities to sort out a path forward. This we know.

But the Metis Nation – Saskatchewan condemns and rejects the kind of lateral violence against other rights-bearing Indigenous peoples we have seen from some leaders. We believe in working with our relations with respect. This means that we will fiercely and without compromise defend the identity of the Metis Nation. But we will not do this at the expense of other legitimate Indigenous peoples. Again, our differences are not about the issue, but the right way to behave as a people and as a government. The MNO has been a member of the Metis National Council since 1994. We believe that the right way to

address these challenges is an open and respectful dialogue that engages our citizens in this important issue and where decisions are made in the proper forum. This means respecting the bylaws of the MNC, and the roles of the BOG and the Métis Nation General Assembly.

The MNO is very different from the situation of those in Quebec and further east who are trying to steal our identity and claim rights that they don't have. This needs to be resisted and needs to be stopped. There have been dozens of court cases in which so-called "Métis" in Quebec and the Atlantic have tried to claim s.35 rights. They have lost at every turn. Frankly, I am concerned that speaking of these individuals and the s. 35 communities in Ontario in the same way could accidentally lend more legitimacy to these assertions. Just as we need to be firm on who is and is not a citizen of the Métis Nation, we should be firm on the line between those who are s.35 – and so have real collective indigenous rights – and those who do not. Instead of looking to Ontario as an existential threat, we should at least consider whether it would be wiser to find common cause with them - even as we make clear our differences - as a bulwark with whom we may wish to negotiate mutual defense.

I also want to address the statement that the conference being held in Gatineau on March 9-10 was scheduled to draw our Provincial Métis Council away from the MMF meeting in Saskatoon. The upcoming conference in Gatineau has been planned since the Tri-Council meeting in Edmonton on January 14-16, 2020. The scheduling of a meeting in Saskatoon by the MMF and the National President at the same time is a clear attempt by outside actors to interfere in Saskatchewan affairs for their own political interests. Those of you who know me will know that I have never been afraid to have the real conversations with my fellow leaders, our citizens, or anyone else. That is part of being a leader.

Let's me also be very clear that the meeting scheduled in Saskatoon is **not** a meeting of the MNC or the General Assembly. Meetings of the MNC and the General Council are convened at the call of the BOG. A unilateral announcement by one member of BOG is not an appropriate way to call an MNC meeting, nor is the position of "National Spokesperson" one recognized by the MNC by-laws. This is another example of the MMF and the National President acting on their own, with no regard for our structures, our democracy or the voice of our citizens.

Along with the Presidents of the MNA and the MNO, I have repeatedly and consistently called for these issues to be addressed at the BOG and the Métis Nation General Assembly. The National President has refused every request. The National President has abandoned his post and left the Métis National Council with no legitimate leadership while at the same time refusing to allow the BOG to do their job. It is the role of the BOG to

oversee the activities and finances of the MNC. There has been no meeting in two years and last year the MNC received \$17 million dollars in funding from the federal government to advocate on behalf of the Métis Nation with no oversight or accountability at all. This is not right.

Instead of properly serving the MNC and trying to assist in much needed reform to that organization, the National President is actively trying to undermine our government and create division and dissent in Saskatchewan by launching legal challenges where we already have active and productive negotiations with Canada underway. This too is not right. Should the National President wish to fulfill his duties and hold a BOG meeting where we can discuss the many important matters that currently face our Nation, and plan for a General Assembly where the voice of our citizens can be heard and respected, I remain ready to attend at any time.

For so many years we have fought for Métis rights and recognition. The Métis Nation has a long heritage of self-government we can draw on to guide and organize ourselves. We have always known this in Saskatchewan. The governments of the Métis Nation will succeed or fail not on our shoulders, but on how well we as leaders honour the teachings of our ancestors. Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont established a government in Batoche to be governed according to the Laws of St. Laurent. They understood the central truth that a Métis government is built on a foundation of respect for a democratic process reflective of the collective will of our people, the rule of Métis laws made by and for Métis people, and respect for the ways in which we agree to make decisions together.

In Saskatchewan, we are building a government. It is challenging, and it requires us to do the right thing even when it is the harder path to walk. We won't always get it perfect on the first try. It will take time. But we will remember the lessons of Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont. We know very well here in Saskatchewan what happens when our present leaders forget them. We have lived the results and it has taken us many years to get back on track. We are open to many paths forward, to many ideas, partnerships and potentials. But on the basic principle that we conduct ourselves with respect for the rules that govern us there will be absolutely no compromise. We have paid that cost before and will not pay it again.

As your President, my position on this has been and remains very clear. No matter how important any individual issue is or how strongly I feel about something, our government won't cut corners when it comes to respecting democracy and demanding accountability from ourselves and from others. There are areas in which some of us sometimes disagree. This is a positive thing when done right. Part of good government is lively debate. It is how we make sure we challenge each other to be the best leaders we can

be and keep the needs and interests of our citizens always in mind. But I know that on this issue of fundamental principle, you will all stand firm with me in defense of what we are building together.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Glen McCallum," with a comma at the end. The signature is written in a cursive style.

Glen McCallum
President