



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Métis Nation – Saskatchewan calls for an immediate, coordinated emergency response to COVID-19 outbreak in north

May 3, 2020 - Métis Nation – Saskatchewan (MN–S) is gravely concerned about the spread of COVID-19 to communities in the province’s north and is calling on all levels of government and stakeholders to come to the immediate assistance of residents.

MN-S President Glen McCallum and MN-S Health Minister Marg Friesen have been working in tandem since before COVID-19 appeared in Saskatchewan. The MN–S COVID-19 response team was established March 12th. MN–S is remaining in constant communication with community leaders to respond to needs accordingly and continues to closely monitor the risks and requirements of each region.

Specific to the Northern regions and our MN–S northern response, MN–S is providing more than \$1 million to address the need for community monitoring, isolation units and food security in our Northern communities. These supports are in addition to the direct support to citizens for childcare and housing that MN–S has been providing, but “the challenges in the north call for the immediate response of all levels of government to respond proactively to minimize the spread of the virus before it reaches unmanageable proportions,” said President McCallum.

In response to the current COVID-19 concerns MN–S Health Minister Marg Friesen said, “We acknowledge all of the work of our Métis leadership throughout the province to protect and support our citizens in all the regions. Thank you to all MN–S Regional Representatives, but especially our Northern MN–S leaders Minister Montgrand, Minister Bouvier, Minister Cook and Minister Carriere. MN–S has been responsive and proactive on ensuring supports get to the communities in crisis and lockdown and we are hoping to contain the spread of COVID-19 by assisting with preventative measures targeting the north. We need to work together to get out in front of this crisis and provide additional capacity not only for those affected by the crisis today but for the anticipated surge in the outbreak in the North in the coming weeks. This is now becoming a humanitarian issue.”

MN-S President McCallum has not ruled out calling on the Red Cross and other emergency response units for field operations. “This a concerning situation that affects the welfare



and wellbeing of people and communities. People are ill. Elders are being lost. We need a coordinated response. This is an emergency. The operations to respond need to be in place.”

“MN-S declared a State of Emergency in April,” said President McCallum. “Now, COVID-19 is in our communities. MN-S has now allocated over 20 million dollars towards COVID-19 relief throughout the province. Travel restrictions in the north are not enough. For the health and safety of our citizens, the time for discussing logistics has passed, we must act now,” he added.

MN-S is working in full partnership with First Nations and Northern Municipalities and is a part of the incident command centre established in Beauval to coordinate the efforts of northern communities to respond to the pandemic. MN-S will continue to help minimize the spread of COVID-19 including supporting the check stops, community containment efforts, supplying PPE, addressing food security, mobile isolation units and implementing other measures to respond to the outbreak of COVID-19 in the north.

The MN-S Ministry of Health has been working with the Saskatchewan Health Authority, other service providers, and municipalities to advocate for Métis communities. MN-S President McCallum has been in dialogue with Federal Ministers as well as the Prime Minister’s office. MN-S is also in conversation with Provincial Ministers and the office of the Premier, explaining the potential for disaster in the north and insisting all levels of government stay ahead of the spread.

“Together we will make the difference,” said McCallum. “Wiichihitooyaahk, Helping One Another and Kii-kay-taak, Let’s Heal.”

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