



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Métis Nation – Saskatchewan donates industrial sewing machines to ‘Masked Makers’ to help with the creation of protective face masks**

**May 29, 2020 – Saskatoon, SK** - When COVID-19 hit Saskatchewan in March, offices started closing, court houses shut their doors and service industry workers were sent home indefinitely. Some sat wondering what the future holds, others took action.

Métis lawyer Angela Bishop is from the small, vulnerable, northern community of Green Lake. She knew that if the nasty virus snuck into that region of the province, the spread would be significant. So, she researched best materials and styles and began sewing face masks to protect northern residents.

Taking an arduous ½ hour per mask, Bishop realized she wasn’t the most adept seamstress and started reaching out for help. She brought together a group of 15 sewers and today, the amazing work of the ‘Masked Makers’ has resulted in the creation of close to 5,000 face masks distributed in Saskatchewan.

It’s an incredible feat but not without its struggles. More than half of the team were using very old sewing machines requiring servicing, others were using old equipment and none of the group members quit. “One of my seamstresses (who has arthritis) has been using a basic elementary school scissor to cut fabric,” and had been using them for about a month already, said Bishop. “Why didn’t you tell me before I would have bought you good scissors? And she said I didn’t want you to spend anymore of your money.” I thought that was sweet, she added.

Métis Nation – Saskatchewan (MN-S) President Glen McCallum, in collaboration with MN-S Health Minister Marg Friesen, seeing the story unfold of the ‘Masked Makers’ and the challenges of using old sewing machines that came along with that, took a keen interest and MN-S has since made considerable donations of fabric and necessary tools to keep up with the demand for masks for Metis Nation.

“I know the frustrations with working with old equipment,” said Minister Friesen, a sewer herself. “Not one complaint from any of the sewers, and no one gave up.”



Knowing that new machines would not only make the mask process easier but could help double capacity, Friesen determined what needed to be done. 15 industrial-style sewing machines were secured and today, MN-S proudly turned them over to the “Masked Makers’. Today’s gift brings MN-S’ total contributions of equipment and supplies to in excess of \$34 thousand.

“Wearing face masks in public places is a part of the new normal and the work this group of selfless sewers is doing, helping protect our vulnerable citizens and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in our communities, is to be commended,” said Friesen.

Incidentally, Angela Bishop is proud to say that, after almost two months of making face masks, she’s honed her skills and is now able to turn one out every 6 minutes. That time might be cut down even further - with a new machine.

-30-

**FOR MEDIA INQUIRIES:**

Julia Burns – MN-S Communications Director  
306-850-1670