



Dear President Mah,

Maarsii. Thank you for serving the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) as Minister of Women and Gender Equality.

This mandate letter describes the progress made to date under your portfolio and your responsibilities and priorities moving forward. It also outlines how I expect you to conduct yourself as a Minister and work with other Ministers, members of the Provincial Métis Council (PMC), and fellow citizens. As accountability and transparency are the cornerstones of good government, I am making these letters public, so all citizens are informed of how their government is working for them.

PROGRESS TO DATE

Traditionally, women were highly respected and central to the functioning of Métis society. Women held essential roles in governance, subsistence trapping and fishing, voyaging expeditions, buffalo hunting brigades, raising children and passing down cultural, spiritual and social knowledge. Our communities were organized around matrilineal lines and championed equality and balance between men and women. However, the increasing presence of the Anglo-British-Canadian notions of inequality, racism and gender norms radically transformed Métis society. Land dispossession, displacement, residential and day schools, and child apprehension have left Métis women marginalized and vulnerable, subject to violence and negative attitudes.¹

As per our constitution, MN-S has worked hard to ensure we have equal representation of women in our government. Having a department dedicated to promoting women and gender equality is critical to our government. It works to represent the needs of Métis women in our decision-making. This contributes to the Call for Miskotahâ number 14 from the Métis Perspectives of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and LGBTQ2S+ People Report by Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak: "That Métis governments include a funded Department for the Status of Women and with each governing member to address the needs of Métis women".

Response to COVID-19

Our government was proud to support Les Filles de Madeleine for its hamper delivery initiative to citizens in need, benefitting more than 150 citizens and families. I would like to thank you, Minister Mah, for your leadership on getting this much-needed support out to our families, children and Elders.

¹ Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak (2019), Métis Perspectives of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and LGBTQ2S+ People Report, pp.20-30.



MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

As Minister, you are responsible for the following areas:

- Work with all Ministers and members of the PMC to ensure the perspectives and needs of Métis women, Elders, girls and LGBTQIP2SAA persons are reflected in all decisions, policy and programming.
- Relationships with families of murdered and missing Métis women, female Elders, girls and LGBTQIP2SAA persons and survivors and advocates across the province, Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak (LFMO), women's organizations and groups, LGBTQIP2SAA organizations, the federal Department of Justice, Public Safety Canada, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Women and Gender Equality Canada and the Government of Saskatchewan's Ministry of Justice.

PRIORITIES

I expect you to work constructively with your colleagues, members of the PMC, and citizens to deliver on the following priorities:

- Redesign the current process of selecting representatives to the Board of Les Filles de Madeleine by creating a transparent, democratic and fair process in each Region to ensure women representatives are all democratically elected by the Region.
- With support from the Minister of Justice, engage and develop a plan to address the situation of violence against Métis women, female Elders, girls, and LGBTQIP2SAA persons in Saskatchewan. This must include responding to the Calls for Miskotahâ from the Métis Perspectives of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and LGBTQ2S+ People Report published by Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak. The perspectives of survivors, families, service providers and advocates must inform this work. Please engage Ministers as required to create a comprehensive strategy.
- Work with the Minister of Education and Early Learning to advocate for the need for Métis women's studies at post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan and across Canada.
- In collaboration with the Minister of Education and Early Learning, initiate discussions with the Government of Saskatchewan of the need to highlight and honour the contributions of Métis citizens and Métis women in the public school curriculum.
- Work with relevant Ministers to ensure the needs of women, children and families are met. This work will contribute to Call for Miskotahâ Number 13 from Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak's Métis Perspectives of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and LGBTQ2S+ People Report:

"That Métis governments ensure equal access and opportunity to programs and services offered by Métis governments for Métis women."



EXPECTATIONS FOR MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

All Members of the Executive must act with honesty and uphold the highest ethical standards in their personal and professional lives. Métis citizens' confidence and trust in the integrity of government is essential. Our Executive Handbook was updated in November 2019 by the PMC. It affirms that all Ministers must adhere to strict standards of conduct guided by the principles of integrity, accountability, responsibility, leadership, respect and openness. I encourage you to routinely consult the Executive Handbook and use it as a guiding resource in your work.

In addition to the roles and responsibilities listed above, there is also an obligation to support and advance the overall priorities of this government. Confidentiality, solidarity and collective responsibility are critical to good governance and must be the foundation of how we work together. Our Executive Handbook outlines the meaning of solidarity. Ministers may disagree and state their personal opinions during private meetings. At the same time, to the public, they must present a unified front on all decisions and support all decisions made by their fellow Ministers. Collectively, Ministers are accountable for these decisions, even if they do not personally agree with them.

All Ministers must work collaboratively with each other and all members of the PMC to establish good communication. We will ensure policies and programs reflect the needs and aspirations of Métis citizens. The unique challenges that rural and urban citizens face are considerations in decision-making. Every attempt should be made to consult with and obtain the views of Members of the PMC, local Presidents, community members, Métis women, youth, LGBTQIP2SAA persons, Elders, and other experts.

As we strengthen our working partnerships with First Nations, the Government of Canada and the Government of Saskatchewan, you are expected to conduct yourself in a respectful and cooperative manner. Delivering success for our citizens requires good working partnerships with external partners and being solutions-oriented.

Our government has zero-tolerance for unethical behaviour. All Ministers are obligated to question any request or decision that they think may be unethical or unlawful. Rules and the proper protocol for addressing alleged breaches can be found in section 7.0 of the Executive Handbook.



As we rebuild our Nation, we know we have a lot of work to do. Part of this journey must include recognizing the devastating impact colonialism and land dispossession have had on our communities, kinship, and governance. Lateral violence is endemic across the Métis Nation. We need to understand how we are going to discard colonial attitudes and re-invigorate Métis laws and ways of living together. In particular, we need to critically examine how we will reinstate the vital role Métis women, girls and two-spirit persons traditionally played in our societies. This work must include addressing and ending systemic violence against Métis women, girls and LGBTQIP2SAA persons. We must also continue to ensure equal representation of women in all levels of our government, and that these perspectives and needs be reflected in decision-making.

Our people have fought for over a century for recognition, respect, and our rightful place as a self-determining people. Over the past three years, we have made substantial progress towards realizing the visions of Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont. From signing the Métis Government Recognition and Self-Government Agreement with Canada, investing in housing, education and economic development, making real progress on the negotiation of the North-West land claim, and strengthening our internal governance, we have made momentous strides in a relatively short time. This year, our communities have faced a significant challenge to our health and safety: COVID-19. We came together to support citizens, deliver PPE and provide critical support for housing, childcare, and Métis businesses. While we must remain vigilant to ensure everyone's safety, we should all be proud of how we have supported each other during such unprecedented times.

Thank you again for agreeing to serve the MN-S and its citizens. I am here to support you in your role as Minister. Together, we will continue to carry the torch of those great leaders who came before us. We can, and we will, succeed in fully realizing the vision of a strong, self-determining, accountable government for all of us as Métis people in this province.

Sincerely,



President Glen McCallum