

Dear Minister Friesen,

Maarsii. Thank you for continuing to serve the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) as Minister of Health.

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

Response to COVID-19

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, our government has led an aggressive and proactive response across numerous departments to protect the health and well-being of our citizens, staff, and elected officials. Creating the MN-S COVID-19 Task Team on March 12, we coordinated and implemented measures to respond to the pandemic as the situation evolved. These supports included:

- Providing emergency relief measures for Métis households, including childcare, which benefited over 4000 families
- Distributing personal protective equipment to all Regions, which has included over 91,500 masks, 50,000 gloves, 800 cases of sanitizer and 200 sanitation kits to date
- Enhancing regional capacity to ensure we had a tailored response to meet the unique needs of each Region
- Establishing a mental health and addiction support line to provide culturally appropriate services
- Supporting the 'Masked Makers' with donations of fabric and 15 industrial sewing machines
- Funding to Les Filles de Madeleine for food hamper delivery to citizens in need, benefitting more than 150 citizens and families
- Providing \$100,000 to expand capacity for the Recovery Lake Program in Northern Region 2 to help with citizens dealing with addiction issues



To address the outbreaks in the North West of the province, we worked closely with the Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC), municipalities, federal and provincial partners to lead a targeted approach.

This included:

- Co-developing and leading the Incident Response Centre
- Declaring a state of emergency on April 18
- Supplying 37 self-isolation units to northern communities
- Providing shipments of food to 20 communities, with enough supplies to last two months
- Supporting security checkpoints and community monitoring

As you are aware, the response to COVID-19 is a whole-of-government response. Minister McLennan, Minister Carriere, and Minister Cook's mandate letters describe the support offered by their departments.

I want to thank you, Minister Friesen, for leading this work for our government. Your leadership and commitment to protect the health and well-being of Métis citizens were critical to our government acting as effectively and quickly as we did.

Supporting Métis Cancer Patients

Recognizing the significant toll cancer places on citizens, families and communities, our government has entered into several research partnerships to understand the cancer journey of patients and develop a Métis-specific cancer strategy.

Partnership with the University of Saskatchewan (U of S), the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency and the Saskatchewan Health Authority

Since May 2018, we have been partnering with the U of S, the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency and the Saskatchewan Health Authority to understand the cancer experience of Métis patients and their families. We are currently undertaking engagement with communities to inform a Métis-specific cancer strategy. To date, we have held nine regional engagement sessions, hearing from more than 350 Métis citizens and partners.

Cancer Transportation Pilot Program

On July 24, we announced a new pilot program to help with travel costs for citizens seeking cancer treatments. Métis patients have unique transportation needs as cancer treatment is only available in the major urban centres of Regina and Saskatoon. With financial barriers and no provincial public transportation, tremendous hardship has been placed on citizens and families. We are partnering with the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer and are reimbursing gas and parking for eligible registered citizens or their family members.



Métis Health and Well-Being Strategy

As we engage with Métis citizens on the development of a Métis-specific cancer strategy, we are capitalizing on the opportunity to also understand the gaps our citizens face in general health and well-being. This work will continue over the next two years to best understand how to close gaps between non-Indigenous peoples in Saskatchewan and Métis citizens.

Establishing a Métis Health Research Centre

Research on Métis health is critical to improving outcomes and closing the gap between Métis and non-Indigenous Canadians in Saskatchewan. We have partnered with Dr Caroline Tait who is a Métis scholar from the U of S, the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN), and Whitecap Dakota First Nation to lead a national Indigenous-led community-based research project to address health disparities in First Nations and Métis communities. Announced on April 1, 2020, this work is funded with a \$5 M grant from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), which is the largest-ever single investment in Indigenous health research in Canadian history. The funding will create a network of nine Health Research Centres, including a Métis centre led by Dr Tait. This centre will conduct Métis specific health research and develop a database for Métis health. It will also train community-based researchers to undertake research on behalf of the U of S and MN-S in their communities. A sub-committee of this centre, co-chaired by MN-S, is developing training modules on Métis culture, history, government, and research protocols and policies.

Food Safety and Security Initiative

The Departments of Environment and Health are working closely to look at the impact of climate change and the environment on the fish population near Pinehouse and Île-à-la-Crosse. The work will focus on understanding the health of each lake from the perspective of fisheries, and to sample game fish to understand if any toxins are present that may impact human health. Programming will begin this fall, and a small team of scientists will begin the work with community members, Elders and Knowledge Keepers.

Addressing the Needs of Métis Citizens with Disabilities

Our government has been developing and strengthening partners with provincial and federal disability service providers and stakeholders to provide support to Métis citizens with disabilities. In the 2019 provincial Speech from the Throne, the Government of Saskatchewan announced it would be introducing legislation for accessibility and invited our government to participate in its development.

MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

As Minister, you are responsible for the following areas:

- MN-S response to COVID-19.
- Health programs and services for Métis citizens and communities.
- Chair of the Métis Addictions Council of Saskatchewan Inc.
- Relationships with First Nations, the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, Health Canada, Indigenous Services Canada, the Government of Saskatchewan's Ministry of Health, the U of S, the Saskatchewan Health Authority, the Canadian Mental Health Association-Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency.

PRIORITIES

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

- Continue to lead the MN-S COVID-19 response to help ensure the health and safety of all Métis citizens. Create and implement an emergency response plan for a potential second wave of COVID-19. Work closely with relevant Ministers.
- We want to provide all citizens with non-insured health benefits so we can reduce health disparities, inequities and health risks for Métis citizens. Our Métis Government Recognition and Self-Government Agreement (MSGRA) includes areas where we can negotiate with Canada to exercise our jurisdiction. Health is one of these areas as Métis citizens have a right to healthcare. To accomplish this objective, over the next year:
 - Explore negotiations with the Government of Canada and the Government of Saskatchewan to secure permanent funding to support universal access for Métis citizens to non-insured health benefits.
- We want Métis citizens to have the best possible care and experience in our health care systems. To accomplish this objective, over the next year:
 - Expand engagement on the Métis Health and Well-Being Strategy. Engage with citizens, families, youth, women, LGBTQQIP2SAA persons, Elders, citizens with disabilities and vulnerable citizens, and health and well-being stakeholders. Identify gaps, assets and opportunities in services and programs in each Region.
 - Negotiate and finalize an agreement with the U of S's College of Medicine, the School of Public Health, and the College of Nursing to allocate more seats to registered Métis students who are supported by MN-S.



- We want to establish an MN-S Health Authority that focuses on health promotion, disease prevention, and social determinants of health and research. To accomplish this objective, over the next year:
 - Develop a strategic and business plan for approval by the PMC laying out a vision for the establishment and operation of a Métis Health Authority, including an approach to funding.
- We want to improve the mental health and well-being of Métis citizens. To accomplish this objective, over the next year:
 - Explore ways to make the Mental Health and Addiction Support Line implemented during COVID-19 a permanent support for citizens.
 - Support the Minister of Youth in holding a gathering with Métis youth and advocates to discuss mental health and suicide prevention.
 - Work with the Minister of Education and Early Learning to support initiatives on early brain and biological development to improve the development and well-being of Métis children.
 - Work with the Minister of Education and Early Learning to ensure Post Secondary Education funding is available for Métis students who want to pursue advanced degrees in Medicine and Health.
 - Contribute to the development of the provincial legislation on accessibility and continue to strengthen relationships with partners in the disability community. Work to identify the needs of Métis citizens with disabilities and develop creative solutions with partners.
- We want citizens to be able to access services and programs in their Regions. A decentralized, Métis-focused service delivery model will best support our citizens. To work towards this objective, over the next year:
 - Develop a strategic and business plan to be put before PMC, for approval by the PMC, laying out a vision for the establishment and operation of a Métis Health Authority, including an approach to funding.
- Support the Ministers of Women and Gender Equality and Justice in the development of a plan to address the situation of violence against Métis women, female Elders, girls, and LGBTQQIP2SAA persons in Saskatchewan.



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