



## Office of the Provincial President

August 17, 2021

Dear Minister Bouvier,

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

This mandate letter describes the progress made to date in this 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

#### Responding to Climate Change

Climate change is a very real threat to our communities, our traditional territories and our way of life. Our MN-S government has taken tangible steps to mitigate and adapt to our changing environment so our children and future generations can continue to live on the land and exercise our Métis Rights.

#### Community-Based Climate Monitoring

Since 2018, we have been working on community-based climate monitoring using traditional knowledge. Funded by the Government of Canada, we are working directly with citizens, hunters, farmers and Elders to identify and monitor environmental indicators on Traditional Land Use Areas. We are also identifying how our communities are adapting to climate change, and what responses need to look like. During COVID-19, we have also been engaging with Métis citizens through online surveys to determine their priorities for climate change monitoring in the northern, central and southern areas of the province.

#### Indigenous Guardians Initiative

In 2019, we held 19 community engagement sessions with over 500 citizens and stakeholders to engage on the Government of Saskatchewan's plan "Prairie Resilience: A Made-In Saskatchewan Climate Change Strategy." Participants shared with us areas of concern owing to climate change, such as the increase in extreme weather events, the impact on water systems, and the loss in vegetation and wildlife populations. These engagements, and our work on community-based climate monitoring have led to the establishment of the MN-S's Indigenous Guardians Initiative. This program will train local youth to set up community monitoring systems to monitor the impact of climate change. A community monitoring system sets out protocols and methodology defining how and when data should be obtained. Each system will be based on areas of concern specific to each Region, such as the impact of climate change on ice roads. Guardians will work with Elders to integrate traditional knowledge with Western science.



Guardians will also work with communities to update emergency response plans for environmental events such as forest fires or flooding. They will also provide relevant training to citizens.

To date, Guardians and Métis Elders have been hired, and work on developing of the Monitoring Plan is underway. Guardians are receiving training through a certificate course offered by the University of Northern British Columbia.

### **MN-S Navigators**

As part of the funding our government receives from the Government of Canada for carbon pricing in Saskatchewan, we are establishing the MN-S Navigators program. Navigators will be hired in each Region to identify and monitor environmental indicators on Traditional Land Use Areas. Existing scientific data previously collected by the federal government will be used in an intergenerational dialogue about scientific and traditional knowledge. This program recently received approval from the Government of Canada, and discussions are underway about accessing data.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, we were unable to hire Navigators for all Regions this summer. To continue this work, we have set up an interim program with a south, central and north Navigator working with Elders. Once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, we intend to hire and train Navigators in all twelve Regions.

### **MN-S Caribou Management**

Caribou are an important food source for Métis families in the northern part of the province, and climate change has had a significant impact on population numbers and habitat. We are engaging with the National Boreal Caribou Knowledge Consortium and the Indigenous Knowledge Circle to understand boreal caribou conservation better and share Métis perspectives. Over the next year, we are looking to actively involve communities in caribou conservation and monitoring.

### **Migratory Bird Harvest Project**

In order to better understand the role of migratory birds in the diets of Métis people, our government recently received funding to conduct engagement sessions and harvest surveys in the south of the province. This work will also track migratory bird numbers, so we will be able to respond to a potential decline in population.

### **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 fish populations near Pinehouse and Île-à-la-Crosse. The work will focus on understanding the health of each lake from the perspective of fishers, and to sample game fish to understand if any toxins are present that may impact human health. Beginning this fall, a small team of scientists will begin the work with community members, Elders and Knowledge Keepers.



## Manual: Environmental Monitoring with Traditional and Scientific Knowledge

We are developing a manual that will outline Western science techniques in monitoring environmental data and integrate traditional knowledge. The manual is designed to be a living document that integrates new knowledge and/or legislative changes as they occur.

## MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

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As Minister, you are responsible for the following areas:

- Environmental protection and stewardship, with an emphasis on integrating ancestral and traditional knowledge with Western science.
- Climate change monitoring and adaptation.
- Support the Minister of Justice on harvesting, gathering and fishing rights.
- Support the Minister of Justice in providing assistance to Regions and Locals where major projects, plans, policies, developments or activities may impact Métis Rights and a Duty to Consult is triggered.
- Relationships with Environment and Climate Change Canada, the Government of Saskatchewan's Ministries of Government Relations, Environment, and Energy and Resources.

## PRIORITIES

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

- We want to make sure our government and our citizens are leaders in climate change research, mitigation and adaptation. To achieve this objective, over the next year:
  - Design and implement province-wide monitoring systems for climate change based on the priorities identified by the north, central and southern areas and the results from the online surveys.
  - Update all community emergency response plans, based on the priorities, perspectives, and knowledge of community members and Elders.
- Environmental concerns must be incorporated into all industrial or resource development occurring on Métis territories. You will work with the Minister of Justice to ensure that environmental considerations are incorporated into all project reviews in the context of the duty to consult.
- 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 2SLGBTQQIA+ persons in Saskatchewan.



- Support the Minister of Justice in the Constitutional Reform process to update and modernize our *Constitution of the Métis Nation – Saskatchewan* and related legislation to ensure they are grounded on our Métis laws and that we create legislative frameworks that will continue to serve our citizens and Métis Nation as we move to towards self-government.

## EXPECTATIONS FOR MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

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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, 2SLGBTQQIA+ 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 2SLGBTQQIA+ 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.

Much respect,



Glen McCallum  
*President*

