



## Office of the Provincial President

August 17, 2021

Dear Minister Friesen,

Maarsii. Thank you for accepting the appointment to serve the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) as Minister of Finance.

This is the first appointment I made in the new term, earlier than other portfolios. Developments within government and the larger world, as we move into Covid-19 recovery, mean that we need a strong and steady hand in this early stage and on a priority basis. I believe you are well-placed to serve our citizens in this position at this time.

This mandate letter describes the progress made last term in the Finance portfolio and the direction on your responsibilities and priorities to maintain and build on this progress 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 ministerial mandate letters public so all citizens are informed of how their government is working for them.

### PROGRESS TO DATE

In the first term in 2017, MN-S funding from Canada had been frozen for three years, owing to internal governance issues, court battles, and the consequent closure of our office. From 2016 up to 2018, Ernst & Young LLP (EY) had been doing the administration, financial and accounting functions of our government. As we assumed our government functions, this became a major impediment to governing effectively and being able to quickly and flexibly respond to the needs of Métis citizens.

In June 2017, MN-S reached an agreement with Canada to reinstate federal funding and negotiated a long-term sustainable funding agreement. We were also able to successfully remove the hold on our accounts that was due to nonreporting by previous management.

To support our government, we have built up a modern financial infrastructure to support in-house operations that is fully controlled and managed by MN-S.

Some of the key achievements of the Finance Department over the past years are listed as follows:

- Effectively took over all the essential accounting and financial data from EY;
- Removed the holds on various accounts and funding held up due to lack of proper or no reporting;
- Restored the confidence of INAC to reinstate the federal funding and negotiating long term sustainable funding agreements;
- Developed the in-house capacity and capability to execute and monitor program-wise accounting and reporting successfully;



- Purchased and installed a dedicated Accounting Server, Accounting Software (i.e., SAGE 300), opened new bank accounts, set up B2B services, prepared detailed budgeting at the program level, developed implemented various finance policies, procedures, processes and set up robust internal controls;
- Successfully conducted third party Independent Audit for the MN-S Financial Statements for 2018-19. The statements were later signed and presented to the MNLA;
- Achieved unqualified audit opinion for the four previous fiscal years, namely 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20;
- Streamlined the processes for the overall MNS yearly budget preparation;
- Collaborated with the Legal Advisor in establishing and implementing the expense approval and signing process for various internal and external contracts and agreements;
- Successfully launched MN-S payroll reporting and HR management software (i.e., ADP, WFN) in 2020;
- Successfully handled significant growth of funding from CAD \$7 Million in 2018-19 to CAD \$95 Million in 2020-21, with a further anticipated growth to CAD \$150 Million by 2021-22;
- Successfully handled funding, in excess of CAD \$20 Million to-date in connection with the COVID-19 relief measures for our communities and regions; and,
- Assisted various program managers, i.e. housing, health, post-secondary education, environment, language etc. in preparing their program budgets, reports and in properly administering their agreements with the CIRNAC.

In addition to the above, we have also increased transparency about the financial health of our government. Every fiscal year (year ending March 31<sup>st</sup>), financial statements are audited by independent Chartered Professional Accountants, and their report is posted online. In addition, at each Métis Nation Legislative Assembly (MNLA) the Minister of Finance, supported by the Chief Financial Officer, makes a presentation on the year-to-date financial report and gets approval on the budget.

As the federal government continues to provide funding through our government for our citizens, it is crucial to put in place effective controls that ensure proper utilization, accountability and reporting of project funds. As part of its drive to continuously improve, innovate and adopt best practices, the Finance Department has created additional capacity to enhance the inhouse capability to produce effective budgeting systems and further enhance the financial reporting mechanism through centralization and implementing effective financial controls. Moreover, the Finance Department has also been mandated to train and enhance the financial literacy and understanding of all the program managers and regional heads as we move forward.

## MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

As Minister, you are responsible for the following areas:

- Finances of the MN-S, including banking, budgeting and accounting;
- Serve as Chair of the Finance Committee;



- Serve as one of the leaders within the Constitutional Reform process to ensure that the progress made in the good governance of finance at MN-S is reflected within the process and any changes that may result in the Constitution or related legislation;
- Relationships with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Indigenous Services Canada, Chartered Professional Accounting firms, and the Government of Saskatchewan's Ministry of Government Relations.

## PRIORITIES

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

- Continue to strengthen the financial infrastructure of the government, including implementing budget planning and control software. Continue to improve the reporting system with strengthened controls and ensure that we continue to receive good and unqualified audits for our government;
- Lead the transition to a public accounting and expenditure management approach that focuses on fiscal prudence, managing for results, and sound financial discipline in an open and transparent manner as we continue to advance our self-government;
- We want to ensure the Regions have the financial capacity to support the roll-out of MN-S programs and services. To achieve this objective, over the next year:
  - In collaboration with all twelve Regions ensure the delivery of enhanced financial capacity.
  - Support the timely completion of all regional audits.
- Serve as the co-lead with the President in the development of the MN-S Administration Act, bringing definition and clarity to the roles of the Regions and Locals within the larger framework of the MN-S;
- Work closely with the Minister of Health and funders during the late stages of the Covid-19 pandemic and collaborate with partners to build post-covid programming to ensure the recovery and stabilization of our Métis families; and
- Support the Ministers of Women & 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.

## 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*

