



## Office of the Provincial President

July 8, 2022

Dear Minister Digness,

Maarsii. Thank you for agreeing to serve the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) as Minister of Economic Development in addition to your existing role as Minister of Tourism.

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**

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#### **Administering MN-S First Time Home-Buyers Program**

To capitalize on the experience of the SaskMétis Economic Development Corporation (SMEDCO), the First Time Home Buyers Program was administered through this MN-S affiliate. Following confirmation of federal housing dollars, this program was announced in July 2019 to provide eligible Métis citizens with up to \$15,000 towards a down payment and up to \$2,500 on closing costs. This program also includes access to professional advice from realtors, lawyers and mortgage brokers as well as mortgage financial institutions throughout the home buying process. By August 31, 2020 there were 155 applications, 94 approvals, and \$1,410,000 in down payment grants and \$235,000 in closing costs provided to new Métis homeowners. As of March 31, 2021 the FTHBP program was transitioned to the MN-S Ministry of Housing in 2021 when they had the capacity and resources to continue supporting Métis citizens buying their first home.

#### **Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Program (AEP)**

To support Métis entrepreneurs and businesses through access to capital by



providing non-repayable contributions, SMEDCO created the MAP program (Métis Assistance Program). Over the past few years our government has been engaging with the federal government to deliver a Métis-specific distinctions-based Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Program that is administered directly through SMEDCO. Recently, the federal government approved this. We are working to ensure a smooth transition for Métis businesses and entrepreneurs. SMEDCO will deliver \$1,700,000 for non-repayable contributions over the 2022-2023 fiscal year to Métis entrepreneurs and community-owned businesses, and program supports.

### **COVID-19 Métis Business Supports**

In March of 2020 SMEDCO was selected by MN-S and Indigenous Services Canada to administer COVID-19 relief funding for Métis businesses in Saskatchewan.

Through this funding SMEDCO offered:

- 1) Métis Emergency Capital Assistance Program (MECAP)
- 2) Métis Emergency Capital Assistance Program (MECAP) Add On
- 3) SMEDCO Community COVID Business Fund
  - a. Stream 1: Micro-Business and Community Advisory Services
  - b. Stream 2: Métis Community-Owned Businesses.

Through these funding agreements SMEDCO administered and delivered in excess of \$20 million during the COVID-19 pandemic to approximately 600 Métis businesses in Saskatchewan. Although these programs are largely complete now, SMEDCO will continue to monitor and report on these programs as per conditions of the funding agreements.

### **Métis Business Directory - SaskMétisworks.ca**

SMEDCO continue to support entrepreneurs by maintaining a comprehensive business directory that enables all levels of government and industry to seek out Métis owned businesses. SMEDCO has developed a certification and verification process by working with the MN-S Citizenship registry to confirm a Métis-owned business's citizenship.

### **Federal Budget 2019 Funding Allocation**



Through negotiations with the Government of Canada, the MN-S successfully obtained a five-year commitment for a distinctions-based approach to further support Métis entrepreneurship. SMEDCO will administer a \$12.5 million budget to recapitalize its gross loan portfolio, provide Métis businesses with non-repayable contributions, and receive program support for developmental lending.

### **Métis Economic Development Strategy (MEDS)**

To strengthen capacity and business opportunities, SMEDCO created the Métis Economic Development Strategy to establish a regionally owned and operated development corporation in each Region. The strategy provides funding to the Regions to work with a consultant to establish a development corporation, including strategic planning, establishing governance, bylaws, and articles of incorporation, to become business ready. These are for profit corporations that are held for the benefit of the citizens of each respective region. Equity funding is also provided to each Region to leverage financing for a viable economic opportunity. To date, four Regions have participated in the MEDS Regional Strategy, with eight more to take part in the next twelve months. Letters to regions will be sent out to resume this program now that the pandemic restrictions have been lifted.

### **Muskwa Development Corporation (Muskwa)**

Muskwa was created in December 2019 to pursue economic opportunities for strategic investments and partnerships on behalf of the MN-S. The first investment was the purchase of a 3150sq ft office building in Saskatoon which will be rented to SMEDCO. Muskwa has been exploring opportunities and partnerships in various sectors, including wind power generation, mining, tourism, heavy construction, and health.

## **MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

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As Minister of Economic Development, you are responsible for the following areas:

- Economic Development;
- Chair of SMEDCO; and,
- Build and maintain relationships with Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, the Government of Saskatchewan's Ministries of Trade and Export Development, Culture and Sport, First Nations economic development initiatives and organizations.

## 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 ensure Métis businesses and entrepreneurs have access to capital and support so they can contribute to the Saskatchewan and Canadian economies and provide jobs for our citizens;
- To achieve this objective, over the next year:
  - Work with SMEDCO to continue to seek out new opportunities for capital attraction.
  - Work with SMEDCO to expand the MEDS Regional Strategy.
- We want to encourage and support our youth in becoming successful Métis business owners and entrepreneurs. To achieve this objective, over the next year, with support from the Minister of Youth and the Minister of Education, design and implement a mentorship program to provide Métis youth with the necessary experience, skills and knowledge in entrepreneurship and business.
- 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 towards self-government.
- 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 2SLGBTQIA+ 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, all Ministers are expected to conduct ourselves 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 behavior. 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.

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*

