



Métis Nation of Ontario
Office of the President

January 29, 2015

The Honourable William F. Morneau
Minister of Finance
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Morneau:

Re: Pre Budget Consultation Submission

On behalf of the Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO), I offer congratulations on your November 4th, 2016, appointment as the federal Minister of Finance. I look forward to working with you in your new role. I hope we can meet in the near future so you are better aware of the significant Metis population in Ontario, our communities, and, our rights, interests and claims. I would also like to provide you an update on the recent legislation passed by the Ontario Legislature (i.e., *Métis Nation of Ontario Secretariat Act, 2015*, S.O. 2015, Ch. 39) that recognizes the MNO and our representative role on behalf of the Metis Nation within Ontario. A copy of this legislation is attached.

As you know, throughout the 2015 federal election campaign, and since taking office, the Liberal Party and current government has made numerous key promises to working with Indigenous peoples (First Nations, Métis and Inuit) to address the very significant challenges that exist and to build a new relationship. The fact that these promises are reflected throughout the mandate letters provided by Prime Minister Trudeau to the federal Cabinet, and that you have identified them as a high priority in the upcoming federal budget, gives great hope to the Métis Nation generally and the MNO specifically that meaningful change is coming.

In particular, I want draw you attention to the mandate letter for Minister Bennett which states she is tasked to “[w]ork, on a nation-to-nation basis, with the Métis Nation to advance reconciliation and renew the relationship, based on cooperation, respect for rights, our international obligations, **and a commitment to end the status quo.**” From the MNO’s perspective, the “status quo” that needs to change within the federal system is that the distinct and unique needs of the Metis are largely ignored.

In the past, federal budget investments have often been announced as initiatives for “Aboriginal peoples”, however, the details of those announcements revealed that those investments are solely targeted and accessible to First Nations, completely excluding the Metis Nation. With Minister Bennett, we know we have a friend that is working to change the way her department has historically dealt with our people and communities. With that said, in order to begin to change the “status quo”, the next federal budget cannot use terms like “Aboriginal” or “Indigenous”, but then solely focus on investments for First Nations.

In addition, such an approach would be inconsistent with the explicit and costed Metis Nation commitments made and set out in the Liberal Party’s platform. Specifically, these commitments include:

- “Work with Métis communities, and existing Métis financial institutions, to develop a Métis Economic Development Strategy, providing \$25 million over five years to implement this new strategy.”
 - From this commitment, the MNO is looking to Canada to enhance the \$30 million already provided by Ontario to the MNO’s financial institution----the Metis Voyageur Development Fund (“MVDF”)----which supports Metis entrepreneurs and businesses in the resource sector. Currently, MVDF is limited to the resource sector, however, a recent independent review conducted by Goss Gilroy indicates that in order for the Fund to become sustainable over the long term it needs to be enhanced and able to assist Metis businesses in other sectors. In addition, the MNO is looking for capacity funding to enable our newly established business arm----Infinity Investments LP----to become self-sustaining. We are also looking for an investment in our existing solar company----MNO-Brightroof LP----that has secured 50+ green energy contracts from Ontario

- “Renew the Aboriginal Strategic Employment and Training Strategy (ASETS) and also expand its funding by \$50 million per year.”

- From this commitment, the MNO, as an ASETS agreement holder, would expect that its current funding would be significantly enhanced, along with other successful and proven Metis ASETS agreement holders.
- “Fulfill the commitment in the Kelowna Accord to enhance existing scholarships and bursaries available to Métis students, in partnership with the Métis Nation.” This commitment within the Kelowna Accord was \$50 million over 5 years.
 - From this commitment, the MNO would seek to enhance its existing scholarship and bursary trusts valued at over \$3.5 million at 32 colleges and universities across Ontario. The MNO believes that a federal commitment would enable it to potentially leverage additional funding from the province and industry for these trusts.
- “Convert current year-to-year funding, made available to provincial Métis communities for Métis identification and registration, to a permanent initiative.” Presently, the MNO understands that this Powley implementation funding is approximately \$18-20 million a year.
 - From this commitment, the MNO seeks ongoing and sustained levels of support for its centralized registry operations as well as increased federal engagement on Metis harvesting and rights related issues as a part of its ongoing discussions with Ontario Government. The MNO is also hoping that an increased percentage of this existing funding be transferred to regional Metis Nation governments, as opposed to this limited funding being used to support the internal operations of the federal government.

While there are other important commitments in the Liberal Party policy platform in relation to Metis rights, including, the development of a federal Metis claims policy, we recognize that additional work is needed in order to collaborate on this work. With that said, we believe it is essential that additional funding be made available to the MNO and the rest of the Metis Nation’s governments in 2016/17 to review and assess the upcoming Ministerial Special Representative’s report on Metis rights.

At the very least, the MNO is looking for a minimum of \$1 million for the next fiscal year in order to begin to work with Canada on these issues as well as to begin trilateral discussions with Canada and Ontario. As you should be aware, the MNO and Ontario have an extremely effective and productive bilateral process on Metis rights related issues, which we believe Canada can enhance and benefit from.

In closing, I want to once again emphasize that it is critical that these Metis Nation priorities and Liberal Party commitments be reflected in the upcoming federal budget in order to ensure the “status quo” is changing. I truly believe that by working together on these common areas of importance we can advance reconciliation. I look forward to meeting with you in the future to further our relationship and wish you all the best in your new role as the Minister of Finance.

Sincerely,



Gary Lipinski
President
Métis Nation of Ontario

Enc. (1): *Metis Nation of Ontario Secretariat Act, 2015*

c.c. Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister
Hon. Carolyn Bennett, Minister, Indigenous and Northern Affairs
Metis National Council Board of Governors
Provisional Council of Métis Nation of Ontario
Doug Wilson, MNO Chief Operating Officer
Margaret Froh, MNO Associate Chief Operating Officer
Joanne Meyer, MNO Director of Intergovernmental Affairs
Jennifer St. Germaine, MNO Director Education and Training
Steven Morse, CEO, Metis Voyageur Development Fund
Scott Patles-Richardson, CEO, Infinity Investment LP