

Good morning. Bonjour. Tawnshi kiya mataen, Margaret Froh dishnikashon.

I am the President of the Métis Nation of Ontario and I am very honoured to be here this morning to address the Legislature along with First Nations and Inuit leaders.

I want to begin by acknowledging the territory that we are on, and by thanking the Elder for the opening prayer.

I also want to acknowledge:

- all Members of the Ontario Legislature;
- the First Nations and Inuit elders, community leaders, citizens and guests who are present in the House this morning;
- and the Métis citizens and members of our Provisional Council of the Métis Nation of Ontario – our Métis provincial government – who are in the gallery today to witness this historic event.

Premier Wynne's announcement today on reconciliation is another significant milestone marking Ontario's commitment to establish strong, collaborative and mutually respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples in Ontario.

Last year, the work of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Canada – the TRC -- came to a close, and it issued its Final Report and 94 Calls to Action to address the legacy of the Indian Residential School system in Canada.

Ontario's announcement today acknowledges the hugely negative impact these schools had, and continue to have within our communities; and it charts a course of action to begin to address them.

Métis, First Nations and Inuit children, families and communities suffered under Canada's residential school system, and its assimilationist policies; however, the Métis experience of residential schooling remains largely untold.

For many Métis children, residential schools and day schools operated by the churches and supported by provincial and federal governments were the only option for receiving an education. Some were forced to attend, while others were sent by their families in the hope of an education and a better future.

As with First Nations and Inuit – Métis families and communities continue to be deeply affected by the legacy of residential schools.

The TRC dedicated an entire volume of its 2015 Final Report to the experience of Métis within the residential school system.

Quoting from that Report, “The Métis experience of residential schooling has been overlooked for too long... There is no denying that the harm done to the children, their parents, and the Métis community was substantial. It is an ongoing shame that this damage has not been addressed and rectified.”

The vast majority of the 94 Calls to Action issued by the TRC in their Final Report include all Indigenous Peoples.

The actions announced here today must do the SAME – they must include Métis, First Nations and Inuit -- if we are to effect real change and achieve reconciliation in Ontario.

I want to acknowledge and give thanks to TRC Commission Chair, Justice – now Senator -- Murray Sinclair, and Commissioners Chief Wilton Littlechild and Dr. Marie Wilson, for the care, attention and compassion they showed in dedicating themselves so completely to the work of the TRC. They have provided all Canadians with a true gift in the statements they have gathered on behalf of survivors, and the vision they have provided for a better way forward.

And I want to acknowledge and give thanks to all of the survivors and their families that shared so much in the TRC’s truth telling process.

**What is abundantly clear from Canada’s Truth & Reconciliation process is that there is much work to be done to advance healing and reconciliation in Canada – both as between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians, as well as between and among our own Indigenous Nations.**

The TRC Final Report and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, together, provide a blueprint to advance healing and reconciliation in Canada.

Six months ago, all three parties of the Ontario Legislature stood together in support of the passage of the *Métis Nation of Ontario Secretariat Act* – recognizing the Métis Nation of Ontario’s unique governance structure. that was an act of reconciliation.

We stand here again today, this time with all-party support for the Ontario Government’s Statement on Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.

On behalf of the Métis Nation of Ontario, I commend the Government of Ontario for taking the important steps announced today to begin to specifically address the 94 Calls to Action in the TRC’s Final Report, and to do so through a collaborative process in close partnership with Métis, First Nations and Inuit peoples in Ontario.

The Métis Nation of Ontario is proud of the respectful and productive relationship it has developed with the Province of Ontario as demonstrated through the *MNO-Ontario Framework Agreement*. We will build on that solid foundation to work – together – to advance reconciliation.

As a Canadian, I recognize that I have a role to play in the process of healing and reconciliation – indeed, **each and every one of us have a role to play in that process.**

The Métis Nation of Ontario is committed to working with Ontario, with all parties of the Legislature, with other Indigenous Peoples, and with all Ontarians to this end.

Together we must chart a new course forward for our province, and for our country, based on respect, understanding and trust. That is the brighter future for all of Ontario.

Merci – Thank you - Marsee