



Métis Nation of Ontario
Office of the President

June 11, 2024

Jacques Picotte
PCMNO Region 3 Regional Councillor

Dear Jacques,

RE: Provincial Secretary Appointment for Environment, Climate Change, and Emergency Preparedness

Congratulations on your election as Vice-Chair of the Provisional Council of the Métis Nation of Ontario (“PCMNO”). I look forward to working with you, and all of PCMNO, in advancing the rights, interests, and priorities of the Métis citizens and Métis communities represented by the Métis Nation of Ontario (“MNO”). Together, we will work to improve the lives of MNO citizens and Métis communities and families in Ontario and strengthen recognition and respect of Métis rights for generations to come.

In addition to your democratically elected role on PCMNO, as the President of the MNO and pursuant to the foundational direction and vision set out in the MNO *Statement of Prime Purpose* and the authority set out in the MNO bylaws,¹ I am pleased to appoint you as the Provincial Secretary for Environment, Climate Change, and Emergency Preparedness. In this role, you will work together with me and all of PCMNO, to provide leadership, represent the MNO, and advance the responsibilities for this portfolio (as further set out below).

As you know, since its inception in 1993, the MNO has been guided by the *Statement of Prime Purpose* that affirms that we, as Métis, have the inherent right of self-determination and self-government and calls upon the MNO, as the representative body of Métis citizens and communities in Ontario, among other things, to:

- “establish democratic institutions based on our inherent right of self-government”;
- “ensure that Métis can exercise their Aboriginal and Treaty rights and freedoms and in so doing, act in a spirit of cooperation with other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people”; and
- “gain the recognition and respect of the Métis as a Nation and a people.”

Based on this foundational mandate, as well as our inherent right to self-government and self-determination, MNO has built a strong, province-wide Métis government to represent our 28,500+ MNO citizens.

Today, the MNO has established governance structures at the Provincial (PCMNO), Regional (Regional Councillors, Regional Consultation Committees, and Regional Implementation Committees), and local levels (Chartered Community Councils) to represent MNO citizens wherever they live in Ontario. These

¹ MNO bylaws, section 15: “Provisional secretaries may be appointed from the PCMNO and for each appointment the term of office, responsibilities and removal shall be determined by the president and ratified by the PCMNO. Provincial secretaries shall report to the president. Provincial secretaries shall support the management of the MNO by providing leadership in the area of their portfolio responsibility and shall advocate, advise and represent their respective portfolios to MNO management, MNO citizens and outside agencies.”



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governance structures all consist of Métis leaders that are democratically elected by the constituency of MNO citizens they represent. The MNO also has established a Métis Women's Council, Métis Youth Council, Métis Veterans Council, Two-Spirit Working Group, Captains of the Hunt, and Senators as a part of our Métis government.

In addition, the MNO has established well-run arms length institutions to deliver programs and services to our citizens and advance economic development interests and goals (Métis Voyageur Development Fund and Métis Infinity Investment LLP). The MNO administration currently includes over 400 staff, located in over 30+ offices throughout the Province.

As we move forward with implementing the objectives in the MNO's *Statement of Prime Purpose*, and advancing recognition and respect of our rights of self-government and self-determination, Provincial Secretaries will play a key role in advocating for and advancing the priorities and aspirations of our citizens and the Métis communities in Ontario.

I am pleased to provide you with this mandate letter, setting out your role and responsibilities as a Provincial Secretary within the MNO. As a Provincial Secretary, the actions you take to fulfill your duties must be guided by and adhere to the responsibilities and requirements set in this mandate letter.

Role and Responsibilities of Provincial Secretaries within the MNO

1) Respecting the Governance Structures and Administration of the MNO

As a government, the MNO must work to ensure that all MNO citizens and all the Métis communities represented by the MNO have meaningful ways to be consulted and participate in the province-wide initiatives that we are undertaking. In doing so, we must respect the different roles, responsibilities, and functions of the MNO's various governance structures, including the Annual General Assembly ("**AGA**"), PCMNO, the Executive Committee, the Chief Strategy Officer ("**CSO**"), Chief Operating Officer ("**COO**"), Chief Financial Officer ("**CFO**"), and MNO administration.²

Importantly, your work as a Provincial Secretary must also always respect the MNO bylaws, the MNO *Statement of Prime Purpose*, and the distinct authorities and responsibilities of the MNO's various branches and administration.

MNO Annual General Assembly

The AGA is the highest authority in the MNO. The AGA is composed of all MNO citizens who are 16 years of age or older and is the forum for MNO leadership and administration to provide updates to MNO citizens on progress to achieve priorities, receive feedback, and set direction for the year ahead.

As a Provincial Secretary, you will be responsible for providing updates to the AGA on your work to advance the priorities in your portfolio (as further set out below).

² This will also include respecting the distinct role of the Chief Executive Office, or "CEO", at such point in time as the joint MNO President/CEO role is separated into two positions.



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PCMNO and Executive Committee

The composition, responsibilities, and authority of PCMNO is set out in the MNO bylaws and includes that “the PCMNO shall make decisions and act in a manner consistent with upholding and advancing the *MNO Statement or Prime Purpose* and shall take its direction from and shall report to the General Assembly.”³

MNO bylaws also outline that PCMNO has the collective authority to make decisions, manage the property and business of the MNO, and do all such other things as the MNO is authorized by law to do. This includes that PCMNO has the power to authorize expenditures, invest funds, or make financial decisions for the purposes of furthering the objects of the MNO.⁴ These functions continue to reside with PCMNO, who has the collective responsibility for fair, transparent, and accountable governance of the MNO as a whole.

PCMNO includes the Executive Committee, who have responsibility for “the day-to-day management and administration of the MNO and shall ensure that resolutions and motions passed by the General Assembly and the PCMNO are carried out.”⁵ This means that the Executive is responsible for providing direction and management of the MNO, consistent with the MNO’s legal framework, policies, and procedures.

Importantly, your role on PCMNO is distinct from your responsibilities as a Provincial Secretary. In your role as a Provincial Secretary, you must ensure that you consider and advance the rights and interests of all MNO citizens and all Métis communities represented by the MNO, not only those in a particular Region or community.

Specifically, Métis citizens and Métis communities in Ontario have built the MNO as a province-wide Métis government to ensure that none of our citizens, families, or communities are left behind, no matter where they live in the province. We do not want to artificially divide our people or create “have” and “have not” (i.e., the on versus off reserve dynamics at play in First Nations) distinctions between our citizens.

As a Provincial Secretary, your role includes advocating for and listening to MNO citizens across the province, including those MNO citizens who are today located in MNO Regions where MNO does not assert that there is a section 35 rights-holding Métis community (e.g., MNO Regions 6, 8, and 9) and ensuring that MNO citizens in those Regions have equitable opportunities to participate and be heard.

MNO Community Councils and Regional Consultation Committees

The MNO, as a Métis government, includes the MNO Community Councils that have been established across Ontario through the MNO Community Council Charter Agreements. These Community Councils form the “local” level of our government and are key to providing programs and services and representing MNO citizens in their local areas.

³ MNO bylaws, section 14.

⁴ MNO bylaws, sections 32-35.

⁵ MNO bylaws, section 37.



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In addition, the MNO has developed MNO Regional Consultation Committees through MNO Regional Consultation Protocols. These Committees are the structures through which duty to consult and accommodate related discussions take place, and are an integral part of the MNO's governance processes.

In your role as a Provincial Secretary, you must always respect the authority of the MNO Community Councils and MNO Regional Consultation Committees, as set out in the MNO Community Council Charter Agreements and MNO Regional Consultation Protocols respectively.

CSO, COO, CFO and the MNO Administration

All of PCMNO, including myself as President and all Provincial Secretaries, must respect and empower the MNO's administration as our Métis government's civil service. It is our obligation to ensure we support and protect a safe, positive, and healthy workplace for all of our government's employees.

As such, the direction and oversight that MNO's elected leadership provides must respect the distinct role and authority of the CSO, COO, and CFO. The CSO, COO, and CFO are responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of our Métis government and are who our administration and staff are ultimately accountable to through the organizational structure of the MNO. This organizational structure includes our Directors, who are responsible for the various branches of our Métis government.

While Provincial Secretaries may provide direction and oversight consistent with this mandate letter by engaging with senior management and Directors, members of PCMNO, including Provincial Secretaries, must not directly interfere with the responsibilities of our administration. For example, Provincial Secretaries cannot approve or commit to expenditures that they are not authorized to do, nor can they direct staff. Senior management and Directors are solely responsible for providing direction and oversight of MNO's administration and staff.

As President, I am committed to ensuring the distinct role and authorities of the CSO, COO, CFO, senior management, and Directors are respected within the MNO to ensure stable, effective, and accountable governance. We will work to ensure that all PCMNO members uphold a framework of neutrality by respecting the distinction between politics and the day-to-day operations of administration.

In order to continue as a Provincial Secretary, you must respect the distinct roles and responsibilities of our CSO, COO, CFO, senior administration, and Directors, as well as ensure that you do not inappropriately interfere with our administration as they undertake their important work on behalf of our government. As a Provincial Secretary, you may provide direction and oversight to our senior administration and management to advance the priorities set out in your mandate letter, but you do not have a role in the day-to-day operations of our government's branches and institutions.

Our ability to protect and maintain the integrity of our administration is why our government has been so successful in the past. This is why we have been able to retain excellent senior management, Directors, and staff, including many of our Citizens who are proud to work for their government. The MNO strives to be one of the best employers in Ontario and Canada.

In order to ensure this is maintained, Provincial Secretaries must engage with our administration through the MNO senior administration and management (i.e., through the CSO, COO, or C-Suite) or



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through engaging with the Directors of our government's various branches to which your mandate letter has relevance.

Provincial Secretaries have no authority to direct any staff member within a Region (e.g., Regional Managers) or within a branch or institution of the MNO. This is to ensure proper lines of communication between employees and senior administration and management are maintained without interference from elected representatives.

As we move forward as a Métis government, we will provide further training and will be developing policies and procedures that explain how this works as well as highlight best practices to ensure that our administration is able to continue to do the excellent work they do for our government on a day-to-day basis, without political interference.

2) Respecting the Distinct Rights and Authority of Métis Communities Represented by the MNO

Over the last 30+ years, the MNO has advanced considerable work for the recognition and respect of Métis section 35 rights held by distinct Métis communities in Ontario. Harvesting rights is one key example. After decades of denial and fruitless negotiations, the MNO turned to the courts and advanced the *Powley* case all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. In 2003, this country's highest court recognized section 35 Métis rights for the first time in Canada and held that: "Members of the Métis community in and around Sault Ste. Marie have an aboriginal right to hunt for food under s. 35(1)"⁶ which the court found was part of the Métis "special relationship to the land."⁷

Using the total victory in the *Powley* case, the MNO worked with Canada to develop a federal response to the *Powley* decision, which included the development of national standards and ongoing federal capacity funding to the MNO for the development of an objectively verifiable system for the identification of Métis rights-holders, consistent with *Powley*.

The MNO has also worked collaboratively with the provincial government in response to *Powley*. In 2017, after over a decade of negotiations based on the framework set out in *Powley* for identifying Métis communities in other areas of the province, the MNO and Ontario publicly announced the "identification of historic Métis communities located throughout Ontario." These include:

- the Rainy River / Lake of the Woods Historic Métis Community;
- the Northern Lake Superior Historic Métis Community;
- the Sault Ste. Marie Historic Métis Community (recognized in *Powley*);
- the Abitibi Inland Historic Métis Community;
- the Killarney Historic Métis Community;
- the Georgian Bay Historic Métis Community; and

⁶ *R v Powley*, 2003 SCC 43 at para 53 [*Powley*].

⁷ *Powley* at para 41.



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- the Mattawa / Ottawa River Historic Métis Community.

In exercising our authority, PCMNO must always respect the section 35 rights, claims, and interests that are held by these distinct rights-holding Métis communities. This includes recognizing that matters affecting the rights, claims, or interests of those communities must be decided by the members and democratically elected representatives of those communities.

For example, our 2023 *Métis Self-Government Recognition and Implementation Agreement* with Canada included the following commitment to not encroach on the authority and autonomy of the Métis communities represented by the MNO: “The Métis Government is committed to ensuring that any processes, discussions, or negotiations related to a specific Métis Right, interest, or claim collectively held by any one or more of the Métis Communities Represented by the MNO will include the Governance Structures Representing those Métis Communities.”⁸

As President, I am committed to ensuring the distinct role of the rights-holding Métis communities represented by the MNO is respected within our Métis government. It must be clearly understood that in order to continue as a Provincial Secretary, you must ensure you are mindful and respectful of the distinct role and responsibility of the Métis communities represented by the MNO.

3) Responsibility as an Ambassador for the MNO

As a Provincial Secretary, you are a role model for our youth, citizens, and Métis communities in Ontario. We rely on you to be respectful and professional as your actions reflect on the MNO as a whole.

In fulfilling your roles within and external to the MNO, you must be professional and remain aware that you are a public official that represents the MNO, as a Métis government, and our citizens and Métis communities in Ontario. Our citizens are counting on their leadership to represent them in a way that honours our ancestors and the hard work our staff and administration do every day.

While negative comments on social media or from elsewhere are realities that all elected leaders face in today’s society, you must ensure you respond professionally to constructive criticism and engage with others in a respectful way. With that said, you should not engage with individuals who are being abusive or threatening. If those type of situations emerge, they should be reported to ensure your safety and that of other citizens is maintained.

As we work together, we will develop appropriate policies, procedures, and further guidance on how to best engage and deal with difficult situations if and when they arise. Always remember that the vast majority of our citizens strongly believe in and support the MNO. We want our citizens to always know that we strongly support them while we fulfill our duties, regardless of different views that may emerge on specific issues.

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Métis Self-Government Recognition and Implementation Agreement, section 14.06.



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4) Your Role as Provincial Secretary for Environment, Climate Change, and Emergency Preparedness

As set out in the MNO bylaws, the President has the authority to appoint Provincial Secretaries from the PCMNO, and each Provincial Secretary “shall support the management of the MNO by providing leadership in the area of their portfolio responsibility and shall advocate, advise and represent their respective portfolios to MNO management, MNO citizens and outside agencies.”⁹

As President, I am exercising this authority and entrusting you with a portfolio and the specific responsibilities set out in this mandate letter, which has been approved and ratified by PCMNO.¹⁰

Accountability and Term

As set out in the MNO bylaws, Provincial Secretaries shall report to and are accountable to myself, as the President, and to PCMNO in relation to your work as a Provincial Secretary.¹¹ You will serve as Provincial Secretary for Environment, Climate Change, and Emergency Preparedness for a term of four years, ending upon the next PCMNO election unless terminated earlier.

With that said, as elected officials, we are all ultimately accountable to the Métis citizens and communities we serve, and providing an update on your work to advance your portfolio to all citizens at the AGA is a key part of how you will be held accountable for delivering results within your Provincial Secretary portfolio. In order to continue as a Provincial Secretary, it will be important that citizens see progress related to your portfolio.

Collaboration

As a Provincial Secretary and member of PCMNO, you are part of a team that is responsible for working together for the best interests of Métis citizens and Métis communities in Ontario, in a manner that ensures fair, accountable, and transparent governance. You are therefore responsible for proactively collaborating and coordinating with myself, as President, and other Provincial Secretaries or PCMNO members where there are areas of overlap or shared interests between your mandate and others’.

Support

In order to provide support for the functioning of the Provincial Secretaries, a MNO staff person shall be designated as the Chief of Staff to the Provincial Secretaries. The Chief of Staff will work with and coordinate the functions of the MNO President and the Provincial Secretaries.

In addition, given the significant work involved in your portfolio as a Provincial Secretary, I am appointing Tim Sinclair as an associate Provincial Secretary who will provide support for you in this role. Associate Provincial Secretaries provide an opportunity for PCMNO members to build knowledge and experience in relation to the functioning of the MNO and the role of Provincial Secretaries in order to be

⁹ MNO bylaws, section 15.

¹⁰ PCMNO Resolution #XX.

¹¹ MNO bylaws, section 15: “Provisional secretaries may be appointed from the PCMNO and for each appointment the term of office, responsibilities and removal shall be determined by the president and ratified by the PCMNO.”



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considered for future consideration appointment as a Provincial Secretary. You, however, remain solely responsible for fulfilling the mandate provided to you as Provincial Secretary in this letter.

Knowledge

In order to fulfill your role as a Provincial Secretary, you must become knowledgeable in relation to all matters identified in this mandate letter, as well as be knowledgeable with respect to the relevant parts of the MNO's constituting documents, including the *MNO Statement of Prime Purpose*, *Métis Nation of Ontario Secretariat Act*, MNO bylaws, MNO policies, priorities, decisions, etc. that will impact your work as a Provincial Secretary.

You must also be familiar with MNO's policies and procedures, including those around conflict of interests, ethics and accountability, confidentiality, and communications. Failure to follow or abide by any of these legal or policy requirements may result in your removal as a Provincial Secretary.

Portfolio Priorities

In the mandate letter provided to all PCMNO members, I outlined several key priorities for the MNO as a whole that you should always keep in mind as you undertake your work as a Provincial Secretary. Over the next four years, it will be essential for us, as members of PCMNO, to make tangible progress on those overarching priorities.

In addition to those broader priorities, this mandate letter sets out your specific portfolio and priorities as Provincial Secretary for Environment, Climate Change, and Emergency Preparedness.

Within your portfolio, I hope the following priorities and results can be advanced:

- Develop and implement a plan for how MNO can improve its strategy around climate change and emergency preparedness, including identifying needs and potential supports for MNO citizens, families, and communities impacted by climate change.
- Support the development of a robust, Métis environmental stewardship program that includes approaches for best practices that the Métis communities can employ when collecting, utilizing, and protecting Métis traditional knowledge as part of engaging in consultation or environmental activities.
- Pursue and promote opportunities for grants or other funding supports for Métis citizens and communities in the areas of environmental stewardship, climate change, and emergency preparedness.
- Participate in all provincial, federal, or national (e.g., Métis National Council) roundtables, working groups, or other discussions related to environment, climate change, and emergency preparedness, in order to advance the MNO's priorities and goals.
- Work together with the Provincial Secretary for Health, Wellbeing, and Seniors as they develop and implement a plan for health supports for Métis citizens, focusing specifically on emergency preparedness.



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- Lead the work to build strong partnerships with environment agencies and authorities across Ontario to support and promote the development of Métis traditional knowledge, environmental stewardship, and other related matters.
- Support MNO Regional Consultation Committees' work engaging in consultation activities, including through the promotion of methods or strategies to combat, monitor, or report on climate change at a provincial level.
- Pursue evidence-based decision making, grounded in strong Métis environment and climate change research, to inform policy and program development that protects and promotes Métis traditional and cultural knowledge.
- Work to see that key provincial and federal government environment and climate change initiatives, policies, and legislation are formulated and enacted in ways that fulfill the needs of the Métis communities represented by the MNO.
- Collaborate with PCMNO and the MNO administration to ensure that environment and climate change strategies are considered within all relevant policies and initiatives, including supporting the implementation of initiatives that reduce the environmental and climate impacts of our government operations.
- Advocate for Métis informed measures, actions, and policies that protect and reduce negative impacts on the environment, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and build climate and environmental resilience.
- Promote the socio-economic well-being of MNO citizens, families, and communities while also supporting Métis rights and environmental stewardship.
- Explore opportunities to expand the MNO's portfolio of renewable energy and energy efficient projects and initiatives, working together with the Chief Executive Officer of Métis Infinity Investments LP, with the aim of realizing economic, operational, and environmental benefits.

I am confident that I can count on you to fulfill the mandate and responsibilities entrusted to you and outlined in this letter. As well, I will count on your support as a member of PCMNO as we continue working to advance the objectives in the MNO *Statement of Prime Purpose*, advance our Métis rights of self-government and self-determination, and improve the lives for Métis children, families, and communities in Ontario.

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Margaret Froh,
President



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c.c. Tim Sinclair, PCMNO Regional Councillor for MNO Region 2 and Associate Provincial Secretary for Environment, Climate Change, and Emergency Preparedness