



Clément Chartier, Q.C.  
President  
Métis National Council  
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Dear President Chartier:

I am writing in response to your letter dated November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2005. In that letter, you requested the Liberal Party's policy platform with respect to Aboriginal peoples in the current federal election. As well, you posed a series of specific questions related to the Métis Nation.

Let me begin by saying that Aboriginal issues have been a priority and continue to be a priority for the Liberal Party of Canada. In this regard, I am attaching a copy of the commitments made at the recent First Ministers Meeting (FMM) in Kelowna.

The Liberal Party is committed to ensuring this transformative action plan is implemented in collaboration with Aboriginal peoples and provincial and territorial governments. I have also provided responses to your specific questions as follows:

*Does your party acknowledge the existence of the Métis Nation, as an Aboriginal people, within Canada?*

On May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005, the Government of Canada and the Métis National Council signed the Canada-Métis Nation Framework Agreement. This agreement recognizes the Métis Nation and its contributions in building Canada while establishing a new partnership based on mutual respect towards improving the lives of Metis people.

Moreover, as a part of the commitments made at the FMM, it was agreed that a Métis Nation Multilateral Forum will be established between the Métis National Council, the Government of Canada and relevant provincial/territorial governments in order to support ongoing work stemming from the FMM.

A Liberal government is committed to implementing the action plan agreed to by First Ministers and national Aboriginal leaders. And we will continue to build upon the recognition of the Métis Nation within the Canada-Métis Nation Framework Agreement.

*Does your party recognize that the Métis have existing Aboriginal and Treaty rights that must be recognized and accommodated by the federal government?*

In the *Powley* decision, the Supreme Court of Canada's affirmed that Métis communities have existing Aboriginal rights that are recognized and protected by section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

Following the release of the *Powley* decision, the Government of Canada committed \$20.5 million in the 2004 Budget to assist Métis groups and organizations to work with different levels of government in response to the *Powley* case. In the most recent Budget, we committed a further \$30 million to assist in this ongoing work.

*Does your party support and commit to implement the \$5.1 billion transformative change package agreed to between First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders on November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2005?*

The announcement of more than \$5 billion over five years to close the gaps between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians in education, health, housing and economic opportunities is a commitment made by a Liberal government and one we fully intend to live up to.

*Does your party support and agree to implement the Canada-Métis Nation Framework Agreement that was signed between the Government of Canada and the Métis National Council on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005?*

Minister Andy Scott, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians on behalf of the Government of Canada signed the Canada-Métis Nation Framework Agreement with the Métis National Council on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005.

This agreement is significant and has guided the work performed under our renewed relationship over the last half year. The Liberal Party stands firmly behind this agreement and commits to its implementation with the Métis National Council and its regional affiliates on a government-to-government basis.

*Does your party have any specific commitments to the Métis people within its election platform?*

As outlined above, the Liberal Party is committed to implementing the action plan agreed to by First Ministers and national Aboriginal leaders at the FMM. As part of the action plan, the following specific commitments were made to the Metis Nation:

- Establishing a Métis Nation Multilateral Process to facilitate discussions with the Métis, the Government of Canada and relevant provincial/territorial governments.
- Exploring, within 12 months, the development of a Métis Nation Centre of Excellence in Education and Innovation through collaborative efforts between the Métis, the Government of Canada, relevant provincial and territorial governments as well as other possible partners.
- Developing a Métis housing approach which offers housing that is sustainable, appropriate and affordable for Métis including developing a Métis housing institution.
- Working with the Métis Nation and relevant provincial/territorial governments, in implementing a Métis framework, as a part of the Aboriginal Health Blueprint.

Furthermore, the Government of Canada also committed to providing resources for Métis scholarships and bursaries, as well as Métis-specific early learning and child care initiatives.

*Does your party recognize and support Métis self-government?*

The Liberal Party recognizes the importance of self-government for Aboriginal Peoples as a means towards achieving political, social and economic sufficiency and an improved quality of life overall.

The Liberal Party is committed to continuing to engage with the Métis Nation in self-government discussions.

Furthermore, as a part of the Canada-Métis Nation Framework Agreement, we are committed to establishing negotiation processes in order to address and accommodate existing Métis rights protected under the Constitution.

*Would your party continue and/or enhance the current federal resources provided to Métis governments for the implementation of the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in R. v. Powley?*

The Government of Canada has invested \$50 million in the past two budgets towards this end. The Liberal Party is committed to sustaining and building upon these efforts consistent with the commitments signed in the Canada-Métis Nation Framework Agreement last spring.

*Does your party support a distinctions-based approach between the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples?*

Our plan recognizes that conditions in the far north are different from those on reserve, and that conditions on reserve are different from those in our cities. It also recognizes the very different issues facing First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation and that the needs of Aboriginal women must not be forgotten.

The Liberal Party is committed to working with First Nation, Inuit and the Métis Nation in order to address their unique challenges and needs.

*Does your party commit to addressing the issue of compensation for Métis veterans?*

Last year, in partnership with the Métis National Council and the National Métis Veterans Association, the Honourable Albina Guarnieri, Minister of Veterans Affairs, committed funding to explore the history and contributions of Métis veterans during conflicts, including the review of the treatment Métis were subjected to entering and returning from war.

The Liberal Party and a Liberal government is committed to reviewing the findings and recommendations of that study, in collaboration with Metis leadership in order to develop an approach to address the issues facing Métis veterans.

I hope you find this letter helpful. The Liberal Party looks forward to continuing to work with the Métis National Council as we build a stronger Canada together.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Eizenga". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mike Eizenga  
President of the Liberal Party of Canada

Enclosures: