



MÉTIS NATIONAL COUNCIL
RALLIEMENT NATIONAL DES MÉTIS

Annual Meeting of Council of the Federation and
National Aboriginal Leaders

Opening Remarks

President Clément Chartier

Métis National Council

Regina, Saskatchewan
August 5, 2009

Thank you, Premier Wall, for hosting this year's meeting of the Council of the Federation with the National Aboriginal leaders.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing all of us in our ongoing effort to close the quality of life gap between Aboriginal Peoples and the rest of Canada.

Moreover, I believe this forum can prove to be very useful in laying the foundations of intergovernmental work on issues of critical importance to the Métis Nation.

The H1N1 Flu Virus is a matter that requires our immediate attention.

While there is some dialogue between health authorities and some Métis provincial organizations, no strategies or action plans have been put in place.

In Manitoba, approximately 20% of the Aboriginal cases reported thus far are Métis individuals.

Many Métis communities do not have nursing stations and the nearest medical facility may be 50 to 100 miles away which is impeding the detection and isolation of cases.

I believe the Provinces and the federal government should be engaged with Métis Nation governing bodies in taking joint action on this urgent matter and would appreciate your assistance in developing a concrete plan in advance of the flu season.

At last year's meeting in Quebec City hosted by Premier Charest, I asked Premiers McGuinty, Doer, Wall, Stelmach and Campbell of the five Provinces within our traditional homeland if they would participate in a multilateral process which would include the Métis National Council's five Governing Members and the federal government to discuss Métis Nation issues if invited to do so by the federal government.

I raised the question within the context of a longstanding concern of the Provinces that the federal government had to be engaged with them and the Métis leadership of their provinces if progress was to be achieved.

Premier Campbell, reflecting the consensus of the five Premiers, stated there was a will to move ahead in a multilateral way if the federal government initiated such a process, and I thank him for that.

Shortly after the Council meeting, the Métis National Council and Minister Strahl on behalf of the Government of Canada signed the Métis Nation Protocol, committing the parties to pursue a number of bilateral issues.

The Protocol also provides that, upon the agreement of the provinces from Ontario westward, Canada would participate with the provinces, the Métis National Council and its Governing Members affiliates on specific subject matters agreed to by the multilateral parties.

The need for collaboration became abundantly clear with the economic crisis and the adoption of Canada's Economic Action Plan.

Many of the priority stimulus projects of the Métis Nation fall within areas such as social housing, education and

training, and economic development where the support and cooperation of the federal and provincial governments are essential.

I addressed these matters at the First Ministers' dinner with National Aboriginal leaders in January at which time I spoke with each of the five Premiers who reaffirmed their willingness to pursue a multilateral approach to our issues if asked to do so by the federal government.

At the dinner itself, Premier Doer supported this approach and I thank him for that.

Early in March, Minister Strahl on behalf of himself and in union with me, wrote to each of the five Premiers with an invitation to join us a multilateral process focused on Canada's Economic Action Plan and the common objective of

promoting greater participation of Aboriginal people in the Canadian economy.

Minister Strahl is in the process of sending out invitations to the Aboriginal Affairs ministers from the five Provinces and the leadership of the Métis National Council and its Governing Members, inviting us to a Métis economic development symposium, potentially to be held in October.

This meeting will enable ministers, Métis Nation leaders and our respective officials to share ideas and best practices on what has worked, and explore opportunities arising from the new Aboriginal economic development framework, economic stimulus, and skills and training coordination.

Minister Strahl has demonstrated strong interest in working with the Métis Nation on economic development and is showing the type of leadership that both the Métis

leadership and the Provinces have long sought from the federal government.

Premiers McGuinty, Doer, Wall, Stelmach and Campbell, I would greatly appreciate your continued support for this major initiative, one in which we can convert the goodwill shown around this table into concrete results.

Thank you.