

President's Message

April 23, 2013

This past week, I was invited as speaker to address a Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce luncheon to speak about our recent MMF Land Claim Decision. Moving forward on the Claim, to finish the "unfinished business of Canadian Confederation," our first steps will be set up a negotiation process with the federal government towards a fair settlement for our people.

The outcome of negotiations will be positive growth and economic opportunity for the Metis. Yet, due to the spinoff effects and interconnectedness of our businesses and communities, the resulting investments, opportunities and partnerships will not only benefit the Manitoba Metis Community, but indeed all Manitobans.

A negotiated agreement to address the Land Claim will, undoubtedly, have an economic impact across the province. Therefore, with this in mind, I took this speaking engagement as an opportunity to also discuss our MMF Metis economic development and business initiatives with the luncheon attendees.

At the MMF we are dedicated to strengthening our Metis economy. We are a young population and education, training and job creation are our top priorities. The Metis Economic Development Strategy was created with the goal of closing the gap between the livelihood expectations of Canadians and the reality faced by the Metis.

As part of the strategy, the Metis Economic Development Organization, also known as MEDO, was created to be an investment and management firm to make key business decisions, generate profits and build capacity for the long-term sustainability of our Manitoba Metis Community and our Metis Government. MEDO had a strong presence at the recent Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce luncheon.

We welcome partnerships with both government and industry. It is important that both recognize the current state and potential strength of the Metis economy. We are a force to be reckoned with. The Metis are hardworking taxpayers. As a People, we generate billions of dollars in GDP and make payments of hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes.

But we have a long way to go in realizing our People's full economic potential. We trust that both the federal and provincial governments will manage our tax dollars to ensure we have the partnership opportunities to continue to reinvest in our communities, grow our economies, educate and train our people so that they can find jobs and pay taxes.

Unfortunately, this trust is becoming increasingly misplaced as the recent federal and provincial budgets became lost opportunities to address Metis economic development issues for the benefit of the Metis and indeed all Manitobans and Canadians. Governments can find us on the farm, on the lake, or in the bush, as well as in other occupations, to take our taxes, but we do not receive our fair share in return for Metis health, education, economic, and other investments.

The business community is finding that it cannot ignore the Manitoba Metis Community's awareness of its immense consumer purchasing power. With a Metis population of a hundred thousand plus citizens, how we decide to spend the dollars in our pockets can make or break a company and possibly an industry. But the Metis influence in corporate decision-making goes beyond our buying ability.

It makes good business sense for governments and industry to work with our Metis government and companies in sectors as diverse as mining, fisheries, forestry, as well as manufacturing and other services. The MMF can build and align partnerships, Metis companies are ideal for local procurement, and Metis employees provide a local, stable, skilled and reliable workforce for business success.

The financial and business communities clearly see the potential of investment with the MMF, and our Crown Corporation MEDO, to access producer, consumer, and labour markets within Manitoba, the rest of Canada, and beyond. The MMF is building partnership relationships on a global level. Our Ancestors were leaders in free trade and today at the MMF we are continuing that great tradition.

I pray for those who have passed on and give my condolences to all those who have lost a loved one. Recently, we lost MMF Cabinet Minister and good friend Ken Leforte. I offer my condolences to Jackie, Danette, Chris, and family and friends on their loss. He will be remembered as a good man and a Metis patriot.

Believe in Yourself - Believe in Metis
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President David Chartrand, LL.D