

April 17, 2015

Le Metis President's Message

The Metis are hardworking taxpayers paying hundreds of millions of tax dollars per year. Yet we do not receive our fair share in return. Although the Metis already receive the lowest funding as an Aboriginal People, we continue to face the threat of cutbacks and the menace of funding denials. It is clear we cannot rely on government funding for all our program and services. That is why we are pursuing our economic development goals. So we – our Metis community and our Metis self-government – can be sustainable and self-reliant.

As taxpayers, we make essential contributions to the federal and provincial governments. When we make proposals for program and service funding we are not asking for charity or handouts. We are asking for our fair share. This is only right. As a once famous motto and rallying cry: "No taxation without representation." If we are going to be taxed we want a say on how it is spent. We want to ensure governments listen and when financial decisions are made the Metis are foremost on their minds.

For this we need empowerment. Empowerment means to gain power. Each of us as individuals may not seem very powerful, but as a focused group of thousands moving in the same direction we have great power. This power enables us to make or influence the political and funding decisions that impact our People. You can exercise this power at election time by putting your "x" on the ballot in support of the candidate and party that has listened to and made decisions to invest in our Metis Community.

By putting our "x" on the ballot next to the name of the right candidate, the Metis can influence the outcome of a federal or provincial election. Through the ballot box, the Metis can send a strong message to all political parties about what issues are important to the Metis and that we cannot be ignored. To a party that disrespects or disregards the Metis, the loss of our support can be a hard lesson.

A few ridings may be won or lost by as few as a dozen votes. Others may require only a few hundred or more votes to win. These ridings can be the key by which a party can form the next government. In analyzing the results of an election, poll by poll, the federal and provincial political parties understand who votes. This knowledge guides what they promise and what they can or cannot get away with. Before, during, and after an election, party leaders look at the issues, attempt to understand voter reactions, and how they will affect election results and their ability to govern.

Once again I say: the Metis are hardworking taxpayers. We contribute to the building of Canada and Manitoba. Our tax dollars fund infrastructure, programs and services such as training, education, and health. No matter where we live in this country, there's no problem for the tax collector to find us. Unfortunately, when it comes to getting those taxes back as programs, services, and funding to address our individual and community needs, we are often forgotten or ignored.

Watching the news on TV, or reading the paper, it is clear that all the political parties at both the federal and provincial levels are jostling for position and are attempting to demonstrate how their party has the best plan to govern. This year will see a federal election, while next year there will be the provincial election. While our MMF Constitution makes it clear the MMF cannot be aligned with any one political party, we will ensure our Metis voters have the information about where the parties stand on Metis-specific issues, giving them the ability to make an informed and strong decision on Election Day.

Funding of programs and services, and other important issues like negotiating the MMF Land Claim are all significant to the Metis. In upcoming federal and provincial elections, the MMF will be asking the parties questions and sharing their answers with Metis voters to act on.

In the past we have asked questions on Metis youth, health, women, hunting rights, economic development, and jobs, to name a few. Similar or new questions will be put to federal parties for this year's federal election. We will also put questions to provincial parties for next year's provincial elections. Know the Metis will come out and vote. Our votes will change election results and the way parties and governments deal with Metis and Metis issues. When you vote, you give our People and our Leadership the strength to move mountains.

In the coming months, look for our questions and their answers on the MMF website, in Le Metis, and elsewhere. I encourage our citizens to become familiar with the party campaign platforms and the candidates in your riding. Ask questions about where they stand on the issues impacting our Metis Community. It is your democratic right to vote. Our Ancestors won this with their struggles for freedom. Together we can inform governments, make laws, and direct policies that will benefit the Metis, Manitobans, and all Canadians.

Upon closing, I offer my prayers for our friends, family members, and veterans who have passed on and my condolences to those who have lost a loved one. My hopes are with those who are sick or shut in. I also offer my best wishes to all.

Meeqwetch,