

President's Message – February 21

Hello from Colombia! I am here discussing commerce opportunities and business exchanges that might be mutually beneficial for the Metis Nation and the citizens of Columbia. They are of course known for their coffee and water, and we have our beautiful beadwork, furs, mukluks and more. I am grateful for the opportunity to meet with representatives of Columbia, and am hopeful that we can make some important business connections here.

We are awaiting the Federal budget announcement, which will be made on February 27. Prime Minister Trudeau has assured me that the Metis Nation will not be forgotten this year. We expect significant announcements in areas such as health, housing and education, but of course nothing is certain until budget day. The Provincial budget is expected sometime in March, however I am not as optimistic about any announcements coming from that budget. The Province has failed the Metis Nation for many, many years. I continue to be invited to the budget announcements, only to watch funding go elsewhere.

This past week Prime Minister Trudeau announced a Recognition and Implementation of Rights Framework to define and promote Indigenous rights around Section 35 of the Constitution. The MMF views this announcement as a positive step forward. It signifies another step toward being respected in a government-to-government, nation-to-nation relationship.

I have a number of upcoming meetings with Canada. On February 26, I will be attending a National Health Forum Meeting in Ottawa. Then on February 28 I will meet with Minister Carolyn Bennett to discuss the Sixties Scoop and a Metis-specific settlement. I'm pleased that Minister Bennett is following through with that meeting after the Metis Nation was left out of initial settlement discussions. After that meeting I will return to Winnipeg to discuss Reconciliation with Minister Eileen Clarke on March 1.

Last week the Province announced its conditional acceptance of proposals to operate retail cannabis locations. Not surprisingly the Metis Nation was forgotten once again. It saddens me that Manitoba continues to disrespect our Constitutional rights like this. Every time they ignore the Metis Nation, it further diminishes the relationship we have and it demonstrates the lack of respect Manitoba has for the Metis Nation, who are the founders of the Province of Manitoba. The Manitoba Metis Government will continue to defend the rights of our Citizens, because Manitoba clearly will not.

As I mentioned previously we will be holding two child welfare consultations in March. The first will be held March 8 and 9 at the Victoria Inn & Conference Centre in Winnipeg and the second will be held in Dauphin at the 11th Avenue Hall on March 15 and 16. During these consultations we will hear from children in care, youth who have transitioned out-of-care, foster parents and more. This work is all part of the legislative review which the Province is currently undertaking, but it is also work that the Metis Nation has recognized as important for a long time. It's vital that we hear from those affected by the system because you best know how to make it better. More information will be coming from your Regional offices as we are looking for representatives to attend both events.

On February 13 we hosted our emergency fisheries meeting. I want to thank all of the fishers and processing plant owners who took the day away, in already hard times, to participate in the conversations. We have heard your concerns and I will be raising them with Manitoba and Canada in our upcoming meetings. We will also be hosting another meeting in April to discuss the option of a multi-cooperative establishment. You can read more about the meeting further on in Le Metis.

In closing, I would like to offer my thoughts and prayers to our sick and our shut-ins. This has been a particularly cold winter, and that takes a toll on physical and mental well-being. I pray and share my heartfelt condolences and deepest sympathies for all our neighbours, friends, and families who have lost loved ones.

Meeqwetch,