

President's Message – October 10

It was with great pride and strong emotions that I presented our State of the Nation Address to this year's MMF Annual General Assembly on September 22. As a leader, it is incredibly rewarding and moving to see how our Métis Government has grown over the years and to reflect on the life-changing improvements we are making for Métis Citizens across Manitoba. For a very long time, we have worked and prayed for this day to arrive. Our struggles and hopes are at last bearing fruit for current and future generations to harvest, creating a brighter future for the Métis Nation.

I want to thank our Elders, Norman Fleury and George Fleury, for their prayers at our Assembly. Their powerful words guided our work at this important gathering, reminding us to help and encourage one another along the way in all we do. I want to express my gratitude to all of our Elders, who have sustained our Métis Nation with their knowledge and strength, in the hope of finding ourselves in a better position one day. I also thank our MMF Cabinet for their hard work in support of your Métis Government and our Locals that connect Métis Citizens across Manitoba. The Annual General Assembly would not have been possible without the dedication and effort of our MMF staff, who make sure your Government is running smoothly. I also want to thank each one of you who came to Assiniboia Downs or participated by watching the live stream. Our future as a Nation depends not only on the work and commitment of your Government's leadership, but also on the engagement and effort of every Citizen.

I also thank Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Ministers Carolyn Bennett and Jane Philpott for their efforts in support of our Métis Nation and the Manitoba Métis Community. At the Annual General Assembly, I spoke of the great strides we are taking toward self-determination and economic development, as partners in a distinctions-based and renewed nation-to-nation, government-to-government relationship with Canada. Under the terms of the Canada-Métis Nation Accord, I have been the Métis Nation's lead negotiator for agreements that are making unprecedented investments in the future of the Métis Nation across our Homeland, including a Métis Nation Skills and Employment Training Accord that provides \$625,369,476 over 10 years for employment services, skills development, and job training; a Métis Nation Housing Accord that invests \$500 million over 10 years for the design, delivery and administration of housing services; and an Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework that will provide up to \$450 million to improve early learning and child care access for the Métis Nation. These funds will be administered by the MMF and other Governing Members of the Métis National Council for made-by-Métis solutions to our employment, housing and families' needs. At the Assembly, I pledged to our Manitoba Métis Community that the MMF will carefully watch and manage every penny of these funds to ensure that they create new jobs, homes and opportunities for our hardworking Citizens.

At the Annual General Assembly, it was also announced that the MMF will receive \$154.3 million from the Government of Canada to invest in the Manitoba Métis Community and to support the MMF's transition to legal status and jurisdiction as a self-governing Métis Government. Together, we are taking the next steps necessary to advance reconciliation between the Manitoba Métis Community and Canada. No longer will there be any question of your Métis Government's legal or jurisdictional status as a partner in Confederation. We are not a "special interest group." From now on, our right to govern ourselves will be recognized in the way that we fought for back in 1869 and

1885. After 150 years of struggle, Manitoba Métis Citizens will possess the resources and recognition to keep our rightful place at the negotiating table and secure justice for our people.

Each of these new victories and accomplishments also mean our work is just beginning. We've still got a long way to go, especially in this province, under its current government. Premier Pallister has chosen to act in ways which have forced us, again and again, to head to the courts for the most basic recognition and protection of our Métis rights. This can be seen as an opportunity to consolidate our wins and grow stronger than ever before.

At our Assembly, Citizens voted unanimously in favour of two resolutions which mandate the MMF to pursue any legal remedies necessary for ensuring that our rights - including the right to consultation, the right to accommodation, the right to negotiate, and the right to harvest on our traditional lands - are protected and upheld. Mark my words, I will honour your resolutions and pursue justice for the Métis Nation's Manitoba Métis Community.

In closing, I send my thoughts and prayers to those who are in poor health or shut in. May you find recovery, hope and community. As seasons change and days grow shorter, take time to remember the struggles of those before you and to remember our Leader and Martyr Louis Riel on his birthday this October 22. As our Elders Norman Fleury and George Fleury guided us in their prayers, may we always support one another and give thanks to one another, whenever and wherever we meet.

Meeqwetch,