

Minister Responsible for  
Indian and Metis Affairs



Legislative Building  
Regina, Saskatchewan S4S 0B3

November 3, 1994

Mr. Gerald Morin  
President  
Metis Society of Saskatchewan  
219 Robin Crescent  
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan  
S7L 6M8

Dear Mr. Morin:

During our recent meeting we discussed future opportunities for Metis self-government developments in Saskatchewan. You had requested that I relay to you some of our thoughts on this matter. I trust that the following overview will provide sufficient detail on the options as we see them.

Basically, we want to see progress toward Metis self-government. The events of the past year have clouded this goal and I suggest have served as a negative factor on general Metis affairs. We believe that the first priority should be to establish a solid foundation for greater Metis developments. That foundation is a democratically-based political and governance system. We believe that this is a critical first step in restoring both external credibility and internal Metis confidence, both of which are essential elements in your drive toward Metis self-reliance and self-determination.

It appears to us that this foundation should address certain key matters such as the following:

- Democratic voting rights for all Metis based on an open voter's list,
- Establishment of Metis constituencies for purposes of fairness and coherence,
- Assurance of a fair and impartial election process,
- Establishment of a Metis Assembly based on the constituency model,
- Clarification of the roles and relationships covering the MSS, Metis institutions, and community-based Metis governance or management systems,

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- Developing new bilateral and tripartite agreements which will reflect and facilitate the new Metis self-government structures and procedures.

An important consideration is how to move forward on these activities in the best possible manner. We all know that the process will be under careful scrutiny by Metis people and the general public to ensure objectivity and credibility. We suggest that a preferred method may be for a "special council" or commission to bring forward specific recommendations for action. Such a special council or commission would be formally mandated by the Metis Society of Saskatchewan along with the Provincial and Federal governments. In this way we would have a joint investment in the pursuit and as well we would clearly demonstrate to all concerned that this was both a valid and meaningful process; all of which would provide an important basis for future arrangements.

To our way of thinking it would be best to move forward with this special council or commission as soon as possible. Toward this end it would be useful to ensure that the membership of the body consist of well-respected, independent and recognized individuals; perhaps three people. This would go a long way in attracting confidence and respect for the activity. One question is how will the membership of the body be determined. We have no necessary interest in governments controlling the selection, yet we should find a way in which governments can more readily endorse the selection process. I suppose the same could apply across Metis country. Therefore, we suggest that one "independant advisor" be retained to develop recommendations for the membership and terms of reference for the special council or commission. This particular individual could function in a manner similar to the role played by Justice Dickson in the early days of the establishment of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. It would be important that this advisor not take a great deal of time in forwarding his/her recommendations. In view of this, the individual's activities would not likely include a process for community-wide consultations. Instead, he/she could hold consultations with key Metis structures or institutions along with the federal and provincial governments. It would be preferable for the individual to complete his/her report within a month. Thereafter the "special council" or commission could be established and could get on with its activities.

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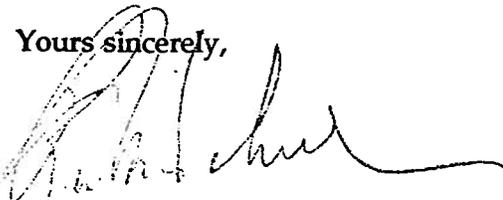
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From our preliminary perspective it would seem likely that the special council or commission would need approximately three to four months to prepare its report. Then, it would formally consult with the MSS and the two governments for the purposes of finalizing the decisions and future arrangements. To support the role of the "independent advisor" and the special council/commission we would see both the federal and provincial governments contributing funding to cover the necessary costs. This would include the election and the initial Assembly along with related processes involving bilateral or tripartite affairs.

In general terms, we regard this concept as having a great potential for bringing about early and dramatic change in the area of Metis self-government development and program governance. Given its emphasis on openness and objectivity it will garner the recognition and support of all levels of government along with the non-Aboriginal public. Lastly and most importantly, it will be well-received across Metis communities and we believe will attract a good deal of enthusiasm from Metis people. Broadly speaking the plan is a "win-win-win" situation for Metis people, the Province and the Federal government. Meanwhile, Metis people will know that practical, meaningful steps have been taken toward Metis self-government in a manner which reflects Metis culture, goals and priorities.

In conclusion, I hope that this presents a satisfactory summary of this concept and some of our ideas on the ways and means to achieve what I believe will be an important leap forward in Metis self-government in Saskatchewan.

Yours sincerely,



Robert W. Mitchell  
Minister responsible for  
Indian and Metis Affairs

cc: MSS Executive and Board  
Honourable Anne McLellan