



## **Press Release Attention News Editors**

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### **MNA Judiciary Council Finds Region One Vice-President Violated Métis Nation's Conflict of Interest Prohibitions**

#### *Rick Boucher Reprimanded and Suspended Until 2010*

Edmonton, AB (December 19, 2007) – Yesterday, the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) Judiciary Council issued a decision in a conflict of interest complaint filed against Rick Boucher, Vice President for MNA Region 1.

The complaint was brought forward by MNA President Audrey Poitras on behalf of seven members of the MNA Provincial Council, including the Presidents of four of the six MNA Regions.

“Now that this process is complete, I look forward to the MNA Provincial Council coming together to work on other issues that are really important to Métis people such as health, housing, harvesting and career development,” President Poitras said. “This decision reinforces the need for people to respect Métis government and work together to advance Métis government for the good of Métis people.”

The complaint flows from the Provincial Council passing a unanimous motion (that was seconded by Boucher) in February 2007 that the MNA pursue a bilateral agreement with Health Canada for the delivery of the Aboriginal Health Human Resource Initiative (AHHRI), rather than entering into a sub-agreement with the Métis National Council (MNC) for the delivery of this federal program due to concerns raised by the MNA's Minister of Family and Wellness with respect to accountability issues to MNA members.

In March 2007, unbeknownst to the MNA President, the MNA Minister for Family and Wellness, the Provincial Council as a whole or the MNA Region One Regional Council, Boucher entered into an agreement with the MNC for the delivery of the AHHRI through Metco Ventures Inc., a private company he 100% owned as of the date of signing the agreement. The agreement provided that Metco would now deliver health programs to Métis in Alberta, rather than through the MNA.

“It is unfortunate that instead of working with and respecting his colleagues who are elected to serve all Métis people across the province, Mr. Boucher decided to pursue his own objectives,” Marlene Lanz, Region 3 President and Minister for Family and Wellness said. “With this decision, I hope that the MNA can now finalize the bilateral agreement with Health Canada that was contemplated back in February 2007 in order to increase the number of Métis health professionals in this province and improve Métis health in Alberta.”

“It is a very sad day when elected officials put their own self interests above the Metis people with no regard for the future of our Nation,” Sylvia Johnson, President of Region 6 said. “As leaders, we all have the responsibility to ensure that we are accountable and not have a hand in disgracing and embarrassing the Metis Nation publicly.”

The MNA Judiciary Council found that Boucher “made a decision to use a company he controlled to take an agreement away from the MNA”, that Boucher “owed a duty to the MNA” and that “he had no right to act on his own contrary to the motion” passed by the MNA Provincial Council in February 2007.

The MNA Judiciary Council also wrote,

The MNA could not operate if every Councillor felt entitled to take information obtained through the MNA and then act on their own through other companies preventing the MNA from proceeding with negotiating agreements when the Provincial Council had authorized the negotiation of such agreements. ...

Provincial Council members do not have the right to act on their own because they disagree with the MNA Executives or the MNA Provincial Council. ...

People in the position of Mr. Boucher as a member of the Provincial Council harm the integrity and credibility of the entire Métis Nation of Alberta by ignoring the process for Governing affairs of the Provincial Council.

In conclusion, the Judiciary Council found Boucher’s actions were “a clear breach of the Conflict of Interest prohibitions under Article 22.1 and 22.2 of the Métis Nation of Alberta Bylaws.” The Judiciary Council reprimanded and immediately suspended Boucher from the Provincial Council and from holding specific positions in the MNA until December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2010.

“This process shows that the MNA’s self-government is strong and that Métis leaders should be held to the same high standards we expect from federal and provincial Cabinet Minister and MLAs when it comes to avoiding conflicts of interests. MNA Provincial Council members are here to strengthen the Métis Nation and serve all Métis people, not use information obtained through Métis government to advance their own agendas,” Cecil Bellrose, Region 4 President said.

"This very serious decision of the Judiciary Council absolutely reinforces the belief of the Metis people in our government, our internal processes and the fundamental principle of good government and accountability," Karen Collins, President of Region 2 added. "The elders, youth and membership have anxiously waited for this decision. Now that it has been made, we can move on as the strong Metis Nation that we are."

The complaint was initially filed in May 2007. An initial hearing date for the matter was set for July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Boucher requested and was granted two adjournments: one to July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2007 and a second adjournment to September 20<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>, 2007. In September 2007, evidence was heard and the matter was adjourned a third time to November 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 2007. The Judiciary Council rendered its formal decision on December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2007. A copy of the full decision is attached.

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