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For Immediate Release

Adjournment of MNC Assembly Irresponsible and Undemocratic

Edmonton, AB (October 19, 2007) – Audrey Poitras, President of the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA), has rejected accusations that the MNA was responsible for the failure of the Métis National Council (MNC) General Assembly held in Ottawa on October 13-14.

The MNC General Assembly had been ordered by the court to meet and elect a President from its 55 total voting delegates, but it was abruptly adjourned before any voting could take place.

At issue was a motion presented by the President of the Manitoba Métis Federation (MMF) David Chartrand, who immediately challenged the make-up of the MNA delegation to the Assembly.

“Historically, the MNC Assembly has never experienced a situation where one Governing Member challenged another Governing Member with respect to its list of voting delegates, but this past weekend departed from past practice, and clearly it was about the President of the MMF, David Chartrand, trying to manipulate who could vote for Alberta,” President Poitras said. “The MNA abides by the rule of law and there is nothing in the law, as it presently stands, that would force me to name only members of Provincial Council to the MNC Assembly. That is a fabrication that cannot stand serious scrutiny.”

“Over the years, it has been the practice of the MNA to take a combination of Provincial Council Members, Local Presidents, individual members and sometimes staff members to the MNC Assembly, and has never been challenged or questioned by any Governing Member, ever,” Cecil Bellrose, President MNA Region 4 said.

Marlene Lanz, President MNA Region 3, said “the MNA delegation met the requirements of the MNC by-laws as well as the stipulations of the Court Order, under which the Assembly was being held. The Court Order stated that the MNA was to have *15 elected provincial voting delegates*, and all MNA delegates at the Assembly were elected Métis officials from the Province of Alberta. This included the President of the MNA, six other Provincial Council members, and seven elected officials from MNA Locals across the Province.”

The President of MNA Region 6, Sylvia Johnson, also objected to the accusation from David Chartrand that it was undemocratic to name anyone besides Provincial Council members to the MNC Assembly.

“What can be more democratic than appointing elected representatives of the grass root communities to the MNC Assembly?” she asked. “Past practice has been for the MNA President to name delegates to the MNC Assembly, and this is what occurred in this instance.”

“When the Chair finally made a ruling, the MNA was prepared to abide by that ruling which would have allowed voting to proceed,” President Poitras said. “But in the face of angry opposition from David Chartrand, the Chair, Dale LeClair, Chief Administrative Officer of the MNC, adjourned the meeting, which prevented any voting from taking place.”

“I am shocked and dismayed that we were prevented from carrying on with the democratic process of a vote on a motion that would have dealt with the issue and would have allowed the meeting to continue to the final process,” Karen Collins, President MNA Region 2 said. “The majority of delegates at the Assembly wanted to proceed to a vote but this was prevented through the actions of David Chartrand. He attacked the decision of the Chair to hold a vote, and created a situation which led to an adjournment of the meeting. We are now in an unprecedented situation, where the MNC has no President and no ability to even convene a meeting of its Board of Governors.”

President Poitras also suggested that if there were any concerns over democracy, these concerns should be directed at what happened at the MNC Assembly. The MNA delegation was accepted as part of the constituted body of voting delegates in a letter from Dale LeClair on October 11, 2007, and by virtue of “roll call” that was read at the opening of the Assembly on October 13, 2007. It was at this point that the President of the MMF argued that only members of MNA Provincial Council could be accepted as voting delegates and he presented a motion challenging the MNA delegation. However, the motion was worded in such a way as to try to exclude the entire MNA delegation from voting on the motion, even though, by Chartrand’s own admission, at least seven members of the MNA delegation were, in fact, already members of Provincial Council and thus were not affected by the motion.

Upon seeking expert advice, the Chair then conceded that seven members of the MNA delegation, whose standing was not under dispute, could vote on the MMF motion. This was angrily opposed by the MMF President and the Chair suddenly adjourned the meeting.

Louis Bellerose, Vice-President MNA Region 6, pointed out that “Robert’s Rules of Order provided a process to deal with the MMF challenge to the MNA delegation, which the MNA and all other provincial delegations were prepared to accept.” However, the actions of the MMF President prevented the exercise of democratic rights of a self-governing Assembly, and imperiled the future of the MNC, which remains without a President or a functioning Board of Governors, since the bylaws require a President to have a quorum.”

Bellerose’s point was supported by Homer Poitras, Vice President Region 2, who added, “if the vote had been allowed to proceed, the challenge to the MNA delegation would have been settled by a democratic vote, and the Assembly could have proceeded to the election of the MNC President.”

“All options on moving forward are on the table,” concluded President Poitras. “The problems that have brought the MNC to this point stem from its failure to respect the principles upon which the organization was founded in the first place. If the MNC is to survive, it is important for the organization to return to those first principles, above all, the principle of non-interference in the affairs of its provincial Governing Members.”

- 30 -

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