



Press Release Attention News Editors

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Dissidents Sabotage Alberta-MNA Framework Agreement

Edmonton, AB (March 28, 2008) – A Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) Provincial Council conference call that was held on March 27 to consider ratification of the Framework Agreement between the Province of Alberta and the MNA had to be suspended because seven dissenting members of Provincial Council refused to make themselves available for the meeting, resulting in an inability to reach quorum.

Over \$500,000 in core funding for the MNA head office is at stake through the Alberta-MNA Framework Agreement for 2007-08. Although the Premier of Alberta and the President of the MNA signed the seven-year Framework Agreement last year based on previous Agreements dating back to the 1980's, the Department of Justice and Aboriginal Relations has taken the position that the Agreement must be ratified by the MNA Provincial Council before it will agree to flow core funding to the MNA Head Office.

“Regrettably, since April 2007, these same seven Council members have attempted to obstruct the normal business functions of the MNA, and all efforts to have the Council approve the Agreement have failed,” MNA President Audrey Poitras said.

In a letter dated March 20, 2008, the Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, the new Minister of Aboriginal Relations, requested that the MNA once again attempt to ratify the Agreement by March 27 or “these funds will lapse and I will have to return these funds to the General Revenue Fund.”

“This was our last chance to have the Framework Agreement ratified,” explained President Poitras. “All members of Provincial Council were notified five days before the meeting that there would be a conference call to review the ratification of the Framework Agreement. But the seven dissenting members of Provincial Council did not call in.”

After it became apparent that there were seven absentees, President Poitras then tried to reach each absentee herself on their home or cellular phones. Not one answered her call.

President Poitras is calling on the department of Aboriginal Relations to reconsider its position in light of the irresponsible actions taken by the seven members of Provincial Council.

“The benefits to the Métis community generally should not be lost because a few people want to play politics,” she said. “We must find a way to avoid having seven people sabotage funding the province has agreed to make available to the Métis people living in Alberta.”

The MNA Provincial Council members who participated in the call were Provincial President Audrey Poitras; Region 2 President Karen Collins; Region 2 Vice President Homer Poitras; Region 3 President Marlene Lanz; Region 4 President Cecil Bellrose; Region 6 President Sylvia Johnson; and Region 6 Vice President Louis Bellrose.

Those who did not call in and were unreachable at the time of the call were: Provincial Vice President Trevor Gladue; Region 1 President Ken Bourque; Region 1 Vice President Rick Boucher; Region 3 Vice President Joe Chodzicki; Region 4 Vice President Tim Collins; Region 5 President Bev New; and Region 5 Vice President Elmer Gullion.

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ALBERTA
ABORIGINAL RELATIONS

Office of the Minister
MLA, Edmonton-Mill Creek

Ms. Audrey Poitras
President
Métis Nation of Alberta Association
100 - 11738 Kingsway Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5G 0X5

March 20, 2008

BY URGENT FAX TO MNAA

Dear Ms. Poitras:

As the new Minister of Aboriginal Relations, I look forward to working with you and the Métis Nation of Alberta Association (MNAA). I am committed to building on the positive and productive relationship between Alberta and the MNAA.

I am aware that certain internal circumstances at MNAA have prevented the MNAA from ratifying the Alberta/MNAA Framework Agreement and the 2007-08 MNAA Funding Agreement. I am also informed that you have been working very hard to resolve these internal matters for several months.

Therefore, it is my hope that you are nearing resolution to this matter and will be able to hold a Provincial Council meeting and secure a motion in support of the agreements so that I can provide you with the remaining 2007-08 funds contemplated in the Funding Agreement for the MNAA central body. However, if you are unable to do so prior to March 27, 2008, these funds will lapse and I will have to return these funds to the General Revenue Fund. (In other words, the MNAA central body will lose access to these held funds.)

Please note, however, that I have instructed department officials to continue working with the six MNAA regions to ensure that the individual funding agreements for the 2007-08 period are expedited and paid out by my Ministry directly to each zone.

I look forward to working with you and the MNAA, and I hope to hear back from you as soon as possible. Please be reminded that March 27, 2008, as referenced above, is a firm deadline for us.

Sincerely,

Gene Zwozdesky
Minister of Aboriginal Relations
Deputy Government House Leader