



Otipemisiwak Métis Government of the Métis Nation within Alberta

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Office of the President

February 15, 2024

Kaila Mitchell
Otipemisiwak Métis Government
Citizens' Council Representative
Provincial Secretary

RE: Mandate Letter for Mental Health & Addictions

Dear Representative Mitchell:

Once again, congratulations on your election as the Representative for the Jasper House Métis District on the first elected Citizens' Council of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government (Citizens' Council). As set out in the mandate letters sent to all Citizens' Council Representatives, I look forward to working with you and your Citizens' Council colleagues in advancing the rights, interests, and claims of the Métis Nation within Alberta and improving the lives of our Citizens, families, and communities.

As President of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government, and pursuant to the authority set out in our Constitution, I am pleased to appoint you as the Provincial Secretary of Mental Health & Addictions in our first Citizens' Council Cabinet (Cabinet). As we move forward on fully implementing our Constitution and making progress on achieving the Otipemisiwak Métis Government's purpose, Cabinet will play a key role in advancing the priorities and aspirations of our Citizens and communities.

This letter must be read together with my letter to all Citizens' Council Representatives. As a Provincial Secretary, you must continue to fulfill all of your roles, responsibilities, and obligations owing to the Citizens in your District as their Citizens' Council Representative, as well as work towards advancing your mandate as a Provincial Secretary. This letter sets out your portfolio and will be publicly released as required by our Constitution.

As our Constitution reflects, it is the obligation of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government—as the government of the Métis Nation within Alberta—to ensure the rights of all of our Citizens and communities are equally protected. As a province-wide Métis government, one of our goals is to ensure that none of our Citizens, families, or communities are left behind, no matter where they are located in Alberta. Our Citizens and communities have mandated their Métis government to make sure we do not replicate the *Indian Act* Band model of self-government, which was imposed on First Nations by Canada. We do not want to artificially divide our people or create “have” and “have nots” (i.e., on reserve/off reserve) dynamics across the Métis Nation within Alberta.

In your role as a Provincial Secretary, you must ensure that you consider and advance the rights and interests of all of our Citizens and communities, and the Métis Nation within Alberta as a whole (not just one District). Our Cabinet must also work to ensure that all of our Citizens and communities have meaningful ways to be consulted and participate in the initiatives we are undertaking. In doing so, we must ensure we work in collaboration with and respect the overall role of Citizens' Council.

Cabinet's Role in the Otipemisiwak Métis Government

I, as President, along with all Provincial Secretaries, collectively form Cabinet.

As set out in Chapter 16.17 of our Constitution, Cabinet "may exercise all executive authority required to oversee the operations of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government and to implement Otipemisiwak Métis Government laws."

As members of Cabinet, it is our Constitutional obligation to exercise our executive authority in a manner "consistent with [our] Constitution, any Otipemisiwak Métis Government laws, direction received from the Citizens' Council, and the proposals of the Citizens' Gathering."

Additionally, Cabinet has the collective authority to make regulations under various Otipemisiwak Métis Government laws. Our decision-making and work as a Cabinet, both collectively and as individual Provincial Secretaries, should strive to ensure the representation of diverse perspectives in order to make decisions and develop government policy and regulations that are fair, responsible, transparent, and accountable.

Respecting Administration's Distinct Role, Authorities, and Reporting Structures

While this means Cabinet plays a role in the overall political oversight of our government, it is important to emphasize that the day-to-day operations of our government are overseen by our Administration. As detailed in my letter to all Citizens' Council Representatives and as further detailed below, Cabinet, including individual Provincial Secretaries, cannot interfere with the distinct, impartial, and neutral role our Administration plays in the functioning of our government. Provincial Secretaries also cannot interfere with the reporting structures in place within our Administration, nor can we direct staff.

While we can provide political guidance and make decisions that fall within our political mandates, our Administration (i.e., our public service staff) report up to the Directors of their department, and ultimately to our Administration's Senior Executive Officer (SEO). Each Provincial Secretary must respect the distinct roles and responsibilities of our Administration, recognizing our Administration as our government's public service.

In order to ensure our government properly functions, Provincial Secretaries must engage through the SEO's office or through the Director of a given department (if your portfolio

engages the mandate of a given department). Provincial Secretaries should not be directly reaching out to or directing Otipemisiwak Métis Government staff.

Respecting the Distinct Roles of the Other Branches of our Government

As a Cabinet, we must be mindful of and respect the distinct authorities and responsibilities of our government's four branches: the Citizens' Gathering, District Councils, Citizens' Council, and Judicial Branch. Cabinet is not a distinct branch of our government. We operate as a part of the Citizens' Council branch of government, and consistent with our mandate set out in our Constitution.

Respecting the Distinct Role of District Councils

In exercising our executive authority, Cabinet must respect that our authority does not extend to dealing with matters assigned to District Councils (unless a District Council is not yet established or a District Council has communicated that they do not want to undertake the express matters assigned to it).

The distinct and significant authorities and responsibilities of District Councils are clearly set in our Constitution (sections 15.7 to 15.9). As Cabinet, we must respect the distinct role of District Councils, which form a separate and equal branch of our government. We must not encroach on the constitutional authorities of Districts Councils.

As President, I am committed to ensuring the distinct role of District Councils are respected within the Otipemisiwak Métis Government. It must clearly be understood that in order to continue as a Provincial Secretary, you must ensure you are mindful and respectful of these distinct roles and responsibilities of District Councils.

As set out in section 71 of the *District Councils Act*, Cabinet does have the authority to make regulations it considers necessary or advisable for the purposes of the *District Councils Act*. However, adoption of any such regulations cannot be done without consultation with a District Council that would be affected by such a regulation.

Respecting the Distinct Role of Citizens' Council

It is important to remember that our functioning as Cabinet is distinct from our legislative role and decision-making as members of the Citizens' Council. As noted above, Cabinet must consider and advance the Métis Nation within Alberta as a whole, which includes all of our Citizens and communities. Our decision-making, as a Cabinet or as individual Provincial Secretaries, cannot be driven by our personal interests or those of any one Citizen, community, or District.

Your Roles and Responsibilities as a Provincial Secretary in Cabinet

As set out in our Constitution, the President has the authority to appoint Provincial Secretaries from among members of Citizens' Council and "[e]ach Provincial Secretary

shall be responsible for a portfolio regarding specific matters, issues, departments, or Institutions based on a mandate letter from the President that must be made public and available to Citizens.”

I have exercised this authority by entrusting you with a portfolio and the specific responsibilities contained in this mandate letter. As a Provincial Secretary, you are accountable to myself, as the President, and other members of the Citizens’ Council in relation to your work as a Provincial Secretary.

In order to fulfill your role as a Provincial Secretary, you must become knowledgeable in relation to all matters identified in this mandate letter, as well as be knowledgeable with respect to the relevant parts of our Constitution, laws, priorities, decisions of Citizens’ Council, etc. that will impact your work as a Provincial Secretary.

As a Provincial Secretary, the actions you take to fulfill your duties must be guided by and adhere to the responsibilities and requirements set out below.

Respecting and Engaging with Administration as a Provincial Secretary

As set out above and in my previous letter to all Citizens’ Council Representatives, the distinct authority and role of Administration must be respected. This applies equally to Provincial Secretaries undertaking their roles as a part of Cabinet.

As a Provincial Secretary, you may engage on matters related to your portfolio through the office of the SEO or through the Director of the department that is relevant to your mandates set out in this letter.

Provincial Secretaries have no authority to direct any staff member within the departments of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government, within District Councils, or within an Institution of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government. As set out in section 8 of our *Code of Ethics Act*:

Unless authorized under Otipemisiwak Métis Government Law, a public official may not direct an employee in the performance of the employee’s duties, without prior approval of the Senior Executive Officer.

As set out above, while we provide political direction and oversight, it is our Administration that is ultimately responsible for the day-to-day operations of our government’s departments and Institutions, including providing direction to staff. We must always respect this.

In order to remain in Cabinet, Provincial Secretaries must not direct or be directly engaging with our staff to influence the impartial delivery of our programs and services. Provincial Secretaries also must not assume a supervisory role with staff or make decisions that fall within the roles and responsibilities of our Administration.

As we move forward, we will provide additional training on these matters as well as develop policies and procedures to ensure our public service is able to continue to do the excellent work they do for our government on a day-to-day basis, without political interference.

Respecting and Engaging with our Citizens and Communities

Our ability to make meaningful change as a government is directly linked to our ability to engage with and be responsive to the needs and ambitions of our Citizens and communities, and in keeping with the Métis tradition of *kapikiskwanaw*, meaning “we will talk.”

With that in mind, it is our responsibility as the Otipemisiwak Métis Government to create an atmosphere that fosters community, collectivity, and shared responsibility. As a Provincial Secretary, you must find ways to action these principles and the intent of our Constitution.

Your Responsibility to be a Role Model and Ambassador for Our Government

As a Provincial Secretary, you are a role model for our youth, Citizens, and communities. We rely on you to be respectful and professional, as your actions reflect on Cabinet and the Métis Nation within Alberta as whole.

In fulfilling your roles within and external to our government, you must conduct yourself with respect and professionalism, and always remain aware that you are a public official that represents our government. Our Citizens and communities are counting on their leadership to represent them in a way that honours our ancestors, our Constitution, the and the hard work of our staff and Administration, in a manner that reflects the best of us.

Code of Ethics and Compliance with Métis Laws

As the Provincial Secretary, you must also ensure that you are aware of and fully compliant with the *Self-Government Act*, the *Code of Ethics Act*, and the policies and procedures of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government and its Institutions.

Cabinet Confidentiality

It is your duty to ensure that Cabinet discussions and draft documents provided to Cabinet, including those under your portfolio, are kept confidential (unless otherwise agreed upon by Cabinet). This ensures that Cabinet members are empowered to speak freely through open discussions, that solidarity is maintained following final decisions being made and for the effectiveness of the decision-making process.

Regulations passed by Cabinet or specific types of formal decisions made by Cabinet will be made available to Citizens through the Public Registry.

Collaboration with other Provincial Secretaries and Citizens' Council

You are also responsible to proactively collaborate and coordinate with myself as the President and other Provincial Secretaries where there are areas of overlap or shared interests between your mandate and others.

As a Cabinet member, you are part of a team that will work together to make meaningful change that is in the best interest of Métis within Alberta and in a manner that ensures fair, accountable, and transparent governance.

Your Provincial Secretary Mandate

As set out in the mandate letter that each member of the Citizens' Council received, we have several key priorities that you should always keep in mind as you undertake your work as a Provincial Secretary, and as we come together as Cabinet. Over the next four years, it will be essential for us, as members of Cabinet, to make tangible progress on those overarching priorities and your specific portfolio priorities.

In addition to those overarching priorities, this mandate letter sets out your specific portfolio and priorities as the Provincial Secretary of Mental Health & Addictions. It is our Constitutional responsibility, as Representatives of the Otipemisiwak Métis Government, to ensure and advance our Citizen's right to safety, health, well-being, and ability to live a good life. In your role as Provincial Secretary of Mental Health & Addictions, you will meaningfully engage with Citizens and communities to further understand their diverse needs and experiences.

Within your portfolio, I hope the following priorities and results can be advanced:

- Support the work of Administration to secure sustainable long-term funding to support and expand our mental health and addictions programs and services.
- Collaborate across portfolios to ensure that all Otipemisiwak Métis Government policies and services are inclusive and reflect a holistic definition of mental health and wellbeing that embodies Métis traditions, values, and needs across all social determinants of health.
- Embrace transparency and enable Citizens to be informed and involved in the development of mental health and addictions programming.
- Continue to build and maintain partnerships that move the mental health and addictions portfolio forward.
- Pursue evidence-based decision making, grounded in strong Métis mental health and addictions research, to inform policy and program development.
- Work to ensure that Métis Citizens have access to high quality, culturally safe mental health care and addictions services that are free from racism and designed and delivered in a manner that respects their unique health care needs.
- Work to ensure that Métis Citizens have access to timely and appropriate mental health and addictions services from a regular provider or team, with care options that are flexible and reflect individual or population health needs.

- Develop and implement a Métis-led recovery continuum that improves outcomes for Citizens facing challenges with substance use.
- In collaboration with the Provincial Secretary of Housing and Infrastructure, continue the development of recovery-focused housing and the development of an addiction recovery treatment center.
- Work to see that key Provincial and Federal Government initiatives, policies, and legislation related to mental health and addictions are formulated and enacted in ways that fulfill the needs of the Métis Nation within Alberta.

I am confident that I can count on you to fulfill the mandate and responsibilities that are entrusted to you, and I may need to draw upon your support on other Otipemisiwak Métis self-government matters. Likewise, please know that you can count on me to support you in your role as a Provincial Secretary.

I am deeply humbled to have this opportunity to serve and lead with you as we continue to build a strong Métis Nation within Alberta.

Yours sincerely,



Andrea Sandmaier
President
Otipemisiwak Métis Government