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For Immediate Release

PRESS RELEASE

Métis National Council Reacts to Federal Election

Confident That Minority Government Will Ensure Conservatives Will Have to Live Up to Kelowna Agreement

Ottawa, ON (January 24, 2006) – Today, like many other Canadians, the Métis Nation awoke to a newly elected government and questions about how this new government will govern.

Clément Chartier, President of the Métis National Council, said, “For the Métis Nation, there are many unanswered questions about the Conservative Party’s agenda with respect to Aboriginal peoples generally and the Métis Nation specifically. One of the main reasons the Métis Nation’s leadership endorsed the Liberal Party in this past election is because they had a clear Aboriginal platform and made specific commitments to the Métis people. Mr. Harper’s government is an unknown commodity for us. Only time will tell whether January 23rd will be remembered as signifying a step backward for the Métis Nation and our rights, or, as a progressive new chapter for our people.”

The Métis Nation’s leadership congratulated all the newly elected and re-elected Members of Parliament. “We are optimistic about working with this new Parliament. We take Mr. Harper’s commitments that he is willing to respect Aboriginal peoples and their rights at face value and we look forward to working with whomever he appoints as the next Federal Interlocutor for Métis, in order to maintain the momentum on the Métis agenda at the federal level. At the end of the day, actions will speak louder than words and our people will be watching closely over the next few months for positive signals,” said President Chartier.

President Chartier emphasized that the Métis Nation’s first order of business with a new government will be to ensure the Conservative government agrees to implement the *Canada-Métis Nation Framework Agreement* and that this implementation will be on a government-to-government basis. “The *Canada-Métis Nation Framework Agreement* was signed with the Crown, not a specific political party. It is essential that the Conservative government follows through on this important agreement with the Métis Nation. As well, the Conservative Party’s commitments to Métis veterans, and including Métis from the Il-a-la-Crosse boarding school in the final Residential School compensation package, must be upheld.”

The Métis Nation also believes the current composition of Parliament will ensure that the historic *Kelowna Agreement* will not be lost. “Mr. Harper and his minority government will need the support of the other parties that make up this Parliament, in order to govern. Both the Liberals and the NDP supported and continue to support the *Kelowna Agreement*. Without question, a Conservative

government's first budget must live up to the financial commitments made to Aboriginal peoples by the federal government at the First Ministers' Meeting. We will work with the government and all opposition parties to ensure this solemn promise is fulfilled," stated President Chartier.

President Chartier also pointed to the importance of the Aboriginal vote in this election and the need for all political parties to take notice of its importance in future elections. "The Aboriginal vote got out in record numbers this election and we demonstrated that we cannot be ignored by any party. For example, I firmly believe the combined Métis and First Nation vote determined the outcome of the Desnethé-Missinippi-Churchill River riding. A Saskatchewan Liberal MP will be sent to Ottawa because of the Conservative Party's lack of clear positions on Aboriginal issues. This is just one example of the power of our vote in federal politics. The outcomes of other ridings in northern Ontario and Manitoba also show the power of the Métis vote. Our people need to know how much their vote matters. And, political parties need to know how much our vote matters."

President Chartier concluded by extending the Métis Nation's gratitude and respect to Prime Minister Paul Martin. "The Métis Nation's leadership has nothing but the utmost respect for Paul Martin, as a man and as a leader. He is the first sitting Prime Minister to respectfully recognize the Métis Nation. Under his leadership we saw Métis in a Throne Speech; signed the *Canada-Métis Nation Framework Agreement*; held the first First Ministers' Meeting on Aboriginal Issues in over a decade; and truly began a new era of reconciliation between the Crown and the Métis Nation. His government did more in 18 months for the Métis people than our people have ever seen out of the federal government in generations. He will be missed, however, never forgotten for what he started for the Métis people."

The MNC represents the Métis Nation in Canada at the national and international level. The Métis Nation's homeland includes the three Prairie provinces and extends into Ontario, British Columbia, the Northwest Territories and the northern United States. There are approximately 350,000 – 400,000 Métis Nation citizens in Canada.

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