

February 28th, 2021

The Honourable Brian Pallister
Premier of Manitoba
Room 204 Legislative Building
450 Broadway, Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

Dear Premier Pallister,

In January, 2021, I wrote to you encouraging the Province of Manitoba to ensure the full participation of the Manitoba Metis Federation in Manitoba's vaccine planning and distribution. I was hopeful, after conversations with Ministers Stefanson and Clarke, that progress was being made. While I understand that some meetings have taken place, it is unfortunate that significant issues appear to remain with regards to the vaccine distribution process in Manitoba – notably the issue of equal access for all Indigenous populations. I read with great concern the CBC Manitoba article of February 24th, 2021 that outlined that Métis and Inuit citizens will not be prioritized to receive COVID-19 vaccines.

The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) states that “adults living in Indigenous communities, **which include First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities**, where infection can have disproportionate consequences such as those living in remote or isolated areas where access to health care may be limited, should be prioritized to receive initial doses of COVID-19 vaccines.”

It is well established that Indigenous peoples disproportionately face poorer health outcomes, which includes Métis and Inuit, making them more vulnerable to COVID-19, which is why NACI made this recommendation.

The rapid rise in cases in First Nations communities has already shown the need to prioritize vaccinations and we can see that working as the number of new cases continue to decline. This underscores the importance of tracking and sharing data for **all** Indigenous populations. In order to assess the prevalence of COVID-19 in First Nations off-reserve as well as in Métis and Inuit populations, it is necessary to collect and share that information. I believe we can agree that it should not take an outbreak among Métis and Inuit populations before greater vaccine access is granted, and that these discussions should not be taking place through media negotiations.

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It is clear to me that, despite earlier assertions that the Manitoba Metis Federation would be involved in vaccine planning and distribution for Métis within the province, there remains unresolved issues. We must work with all partners to ensure their concerns are addressed as the vaccine rollout continues.

In the spirit of cooperation, I am proposing a meeting between President Chartrand, you and myself, to ensure everyone works together to prioritize the vaccination of the most vulnerable and susceptible. I reiterate the NACI guidelines, Indigenous Peoples are to be prioritized and that includes Métis and Inuit. As I said in my January 15th letter, I remain ready to assist in any way I can.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Vandal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping underline.

Hon. Daniel Vandal

Cc:

President David Chartrand, Manitoba Metis Federation
Hon. Marc Miller, Minister of Indigenous Services Canada
Hon. Jim Carr, Minister, Special Representative for the Prairies
Hon. Dominic LeBlanc, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs
Hon. Heather Stefanson, Minister of Health and Seniors Care - Manitoba
Hon. Eileen Clarke, Minister of Indigenous and Northern Relations - Manitoba