



*Message from
SCO Grand Chief Chris Henderson*

On behalf of the Southern Chiefs' Organization Inc. I want to congratulate and commend Ms. Lisa Meeches, of the Long Plain First Nation, on receiving a National Aboriginal Achievement Award for her award-winning work in Media & Communications!



Lisa Meeches, executive producer of Winnipeg-based Eagle Vision Inc., was one of 14 recipients who received a National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation Award.

I had the opportunity and pleasure of attending the NAAA's ceremony on Friday March 16, 2007 in Edmonton, Alberta to witness Ms. Meeches receive this prestigious award. Once again, congratulations Ms. Meeches and keep up the excellent work!

In other news, by the time you receive this newspaper, the Federal Conservative Government will have

tabled its second federal budget in Ottawa on March 19, 2007. First Nations across Canada, including here in Southern Manitoba, are not expecting new monies for their needs and issues in this budget.

Despite speculation that this Federal Government will have, once again, a healthy and hefty surplus, we can expect more tax cuts for the rich and affluent, while our First Nations continue to be plagued by mould-infested homes, inferior roads – or no roads at all, unsafe and outdated airports, and poor drinking water.

Watch for the next edition of South Wind when we get budget reaction from some of our Southern Chiefs. Until next time, take care and God Bless!

Meegwetch!



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SCO AND COMMUNITY GROUPS INVITE WPG. MAYOR TO WORK TOGETHER IN ESTABLISHING POLICE COMMISSION

Last January 2007, Winnipeg's Mayor Sam Katz had announced in his annual State of the City Address to the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce that he wanted to create a civilian police commission within the next six months.

Since that time, Mayor Katz recently stated that it would be "...at least two years" before this proposed police commission is up and running.

On Monday March 19, 2007, SCO Grand Chief Chris Henderson and Inner City Safety Coalition spokesperson, Mr. Tom Simms, held a press conference inviting Mayor Katz to work in partnership in establishing a civilian police commission for the Winnipeg Police Service.



SCO Grand Chief Henderson and Tom Simms, Co-Executive Director of Community Education Development Association at Press Conference on March 19, 2007.

"We are inviting Mayor Katz and the City of Winnipeg government to work with us in establishing a citizen-led police commission," stated Grand Chief Henderson. "SCO is pleased to lend its support to the Inner City Safety Coalition's call for meaningful community input into the police commission creation process, as the City of Winnipeg moves forward with the future of policing in our city."

"Based on our peoples' shaky and sometimes strained relationship with the Winnipeg police, I believe that establishing this civilian police commission, as well as allowing for community input into the police commission creation process itself, would only strengthen our peoples confidence and build trust in the Winnipeg police force," said Grand Chief Henderson.

The City of Winnipeg is the only jurisdiction among the 10 largest cities in Canada that does not have a civilian police commission to provide oversight of its police service. A police commission serves as a "board of directors" that oversees the operation of a police service.

SCO Grand Chief Henderson is of the view that such a commission would increase public accountability and transparency within the WPS.

"SCO is pleased to lend its support to the Inner City Safety Coalition's call for meaningful community input into the police commission creation process, as the City of Winnipeg moves forward with the future of policing in our city."

Key issues that need to be addressed during the police commission creation process include; who appoints the members of the police commission, what will the powers of the commission be, and questions regarding the accountability of the police commission to the public.

As a first step in the police commission creation process, the Inner City Safety Coalition is inviting Mayor Katz to partner in bringing Mr. Andrew Graham of the School of Policy Studies at Queens University to Winnipeg in April 2007 to talk about his study on the best practices of police board governance. To date, the Mayor's Office has not officially replied to this invitation.

JUSTICE DEVOLUTION TALKS BACK ON TRACK?

Positive! That's how SCO Grand Chief Chris Henderson describes a recent meeting between Manitoba's Minister of Justice, himself, the MKIO and the MMF.

The topic of the February 28, 2007 meeting? To restart the negotiations under the devolution process, to transfer the delivery of community corrections and probation services from the province to the First Nations and Metis.

"Overall the meeting was positive," stated Grand Chief Henderson, who signed the Memorandum of Understanding and the Protocol Agreement for this devolution process on behalf of the Southern First Nations on May 31, 2005. "This meeting was long overdue and there was a commitment by Justice Minister Dave Chomiak to meet more often to get this process back on track."

Since the MOU signing, the signatories, which includes SCO, MKIO, MMF and the province, have been meeting to develop a detailed implementation and transition plan for this transfer. The vision for this justice devolution exercise is simple: To have two First Nations operated and controlled agencies handle and deliver community corrections and probation services to First Nations citizens in Manitoba – one for the south and one for the north. Another agency for the Metis would deliver similar services province-wide for Metis people.

However, negotiations came to a halt in mid-2006 when the province demanded that the Manitoba General Government Employees Union (MGEU) have a seat at the negotiating table. The MGEU represents all government employees, including probation officers. Their issue: To protect the job security of its members who may be affected by the transfer and transition process of this devolution initiative.

"For the record, we are not opposed to the union per se," said Grand Chief Henderson. "We have no doubt that its members who work in probations have a wealth of experience and knowledge, as well as years of loyal public service to this justice system. However, we do take a different view in terms of their union's level of involvement in our negotiations with the province."

Among the concerns that the First Nations and Metis leadership have with the union being at the senior negotiating table is that they are not a signatory party to the MOU and Protocol Agreement. SCO, MKIO and MMF believe that the Province of Manitoba is the official representative on behalf of its employees, including the MGEU.

Under the terms of the MOU and Protocol Agreement, each party's representative sits as a member of the Joint Implementation and Monitoring Committee. This body is tasked with negotiating the implementation and transition plan for this devolution process. Since the province insisted on the MGEU's involvement at this table, negotiations came to a halt, a move adopted unanimously by the SCO, MKIO and the MMF.



Signing Ceremony of the MOU Agreement of the Devolution of Probation Initiative, May 31, 2005.

The union issue was the major topic of discussion at the February 28 face-to-face meeting between Justice Minister Chomiak, Grand Chief Henderson, MMF President David Chartrand and the MKIO's Justice Portfolio Holder.

"We recognize that the province has to honour and abide by its collective bargaining agreement it has with all of its employees and the MGEU," stated Grand Chief Henderson. "However, the province has to equally recognize and appreciate that we are not at a point in our negotiations where we can talk about job security for their current probation workers, when we haven't even finalized the implementation plan and how these new agencies will look and who will staff them."

In the end, there was no resolution to this matter, but Minister Chomiak committed to more meetings with the leadership to get these negotiations back on track. Another major item that will be at the top of the next meetings agenda is extending the term of the Protocol Agreement. The current agreement is set to expire at the end of March 2007.



Minister of Justice, David Chomiak



Southern Grand Chief Henderson speaks at the MOU Agreement of the Devolution of Probation Initiative official Signing on May 31, 2005.