



Tsi Nahò:ten Karihwanákere Nó:nen'k

PRESS RELEASE

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MCK statement on Directive 55 regarding Cigarette, Tobacco and Convenience Stores

For immediate release

(Kahnawake - January 19, 2021) The Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (MCK) wishes to make a statement to the community regarding the issue of conversion and reclassification of some retail stores as per Kahnawà:ke COVID-19 Task Force Directive 55, which was issued last week.

As previously stated, “The Task Force decided to close retail stores, which includes cigarette/tobacco stores, as they often cater mainly to non-local clients and are therefore at risk of increasing the spread of the COVID-19 virus to the community.”

As reported last week, a small number of retail businesses in the community requested to be recategorized as convenience stores. One of those was for a business located on Highway 132 that had been ticketed by Peacekeepers earlier in the week for selling tobacco products to non-locals in defiance of the Task Force Directives.

While the business technically met the requirements to be reclassified, community members were outraged that a business that clearly defied a Directive (empowered by Kahnawà:ke’s *Emergency Measures Law*) was able to continue operating under this new classification. This has unfortunately resulted in much negative commentary and lateral violence.

The MCK understands and has supported the community businesses that have been understanding and supportive of the drastic measures that have had to be taken to combat the virus and keep the community safe. The MCK has clearly supported – and will continue to support – the Task Force in its difficult job during this unprecedented pandemic.

Decisions are being made on a daily basis during this State of Emergency, to the best of everyone’s abilities and based on the best information available. As stated in the past, Directives are being reviewed on a weekly basis. Should changes be needed, they will be made immediately after due diligence.

Please note that the community’s concerns and frustrations are being clearly heard and understood. While certain businesses should be allowed to be reclassified, this should be done in the spirit of the Directive. The biggest concern the MCK has is that businesses on Highways 132 and 138 are clearly meant to cater to outside clientele. While this is fine during normal times, the current situation dictates that non-locals should be dissuaded from shopping in the community during this short period until the end of the month.

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