



Kahnawà:ke Ratítsénhaiens

Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke

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Tsi Nahóten Karihwanákere No'nenk News Release

Mohawk Council of Akwesá:sne Requests Support

For immediate release

(Kahnawake – 10, Ohiari:ha / June 2009) The Mohawk Council Kahnawà:ke (MCK) announced today that it has responded to the Mohawk Council of Akwesá:sne request for support for the opening of talks with Canada regarding the government's plan to arm border officers.

The MCK is sending a letter to federal Minister of Public Safety Peter Van Loan, urging him to begin meaningful dialogue with our brothers and sisters in Akwesá:sne.

As well, the MCK would like to commend the people of Akwesá:sne, and their leadership, for their patience, steadfastness and determination in this difficult time.

"They have conducted themselves with both dignity and pride during this challenging time," said Grand Chief Michael Delisle, Jr. "They have maintained a peaceful campaign, and are urging other communities to hold peace fires as well."

Chief & Council will visit Akwesá:sne on Friday as a sign of solidarity.

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For information about this release, please contact:

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MOHAWK COUNCIL OF AKWESASNE

Ohiariha / June 3, 2009

cc: C&C
Alana Rice
Dwayne White
Mike O'Brien



Watkwanonweraton;

Re: The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne Requests First Nation Support to Open Talks with the Government of Canada on the Arming of Border Officers

The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne (MCA) requests the support of First Nations Communities, Regional Organizations and First Nations Organizations to assist us in having our voices heard by the Canadian Government regarding the Arming of Border Officers at the Canada Customs Port of Entry at Akwesasne.

The MCA asks that you and the members of your First Nation and organization contact your local Members of Parliament to insist that the Minister of Public Safety, Peter Van Loan begin meaningful dialogue with the Mohawks of Akwesasne on the firearms issue.

Background

The relationship between Canada Customs and the Akwesasne Community has not been a good one in recent years, due to the extreme number of complaints of human rights violations by Canada Customs Officers against Mohawks, including incidents of mistreatment, harassment and racial profiling. These are still unresolved.

For the last two years, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne has sought to have meetings with Canada regarding their policy to require the border officers at the Customs Port of entry at Akwesasne to carry firearms - but no meaningful negotiations have occurred. Letters to the Minister of Public Safety and other Ministers went unanswered for months and responsibility for dealing with this issue was bounced back and forth between various government offices.

In recent months, the Akwesasne community has reiterated that arming of the Customs Officers would be a recipe for disaster given the bitter relationship that exists between the Canada Border Services Agency and community members. In the spring when Canada announced that customs officers would be armed as early as June 1st, the Akwesasne Community strongly objected and peaceful demonstrations began with a Unity March on May 1st which was supported by all three Mohawk Governments at Akwesasne.

Mohawk Gov't Office (613) 575-2348
(613) 575-2220



Admin. Office (613) 575-2286
(613) 575-2222

After days of peaceful protest, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne requests for emergency meetings with the Minister of Public Safety Peter Van Loan and the Department of Indian Affairs Minister Chuck Strahl fell on deaf ears.

On May 31, Canada Customs made the decision to vacate the Customs facility of their own volition, which activated a protocol which called for the closure of the entire bridge crossing to both Canada and the United States. The closure has caused the Akwesasne Community to activate emergency measures to insure the functioning of this First Nation community, to ensure the health and safety of its people and the delivery of medical treatment, goods and services.

Still, the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne has been unable to get meetings with appropriate Ministers to begin meaningful dialogue.

Call for Support:

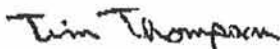
The Assembly of First Nations, the Chiefs of Ontario and the Union of Ontario Indians have issued statements in support of Akwesasne's plight, such as that stated by AFN National Chief Phil Fontaine:

"It is our understanding that the people of the Akwesasne Mohawk Nation have put forward a number of constructive proposals to the federal government and the Canada Border Services Agency to resolve the situation. These peaceful and constructive proposals offer the best way forward and we urge the federal government to actively work with the leadership of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne to resolve the matter as expeditiously as possible."

We call on the support of First Nations leadership, Regional organizations and other First Nations Organizations to contact their Members of Parliament to urge them to have Public Safety Minister Peter Van Loan meet with the Mohawks regarding these important issues.

The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne stands in unity with the St. Regis Mohawk Tribal Council and the Mohawk Nation Council on this issue. We hope you will also find this cause worthy of your support.

Niawenkowa,



Tim Thompson
Grand Chief
Mohawk Council of Akwesasne.