Nishnawbe Aski Nation
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100 Back Street, Unit 200, Thunder Bay, ON P7J 1L2
Tel: (807) 623-8228 Fax: (807) 623-7730 www.nan.on.ca

NEWS RELEASE

Thursday November 19, 2009 **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

PROPOSED HST DENIES CONSTITUTIONALLY PROTECTED RIGHTS OF FIRST NATIONS

THUNDER BAY, ON: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy demands consultation and accommodation of the rights of First Nations, following Premier Dalton McGuinty's reported refusal to hold public hearings on the proposed harmonized sales tax (HST).

"The Ontario government has introduced HST legislation without consulting First Nations and now it's being reported they're refusing to hold public hearings to consider the impacts of the combined tax," said Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Grand Chief Stan Beardy, adding that the proposed legislation conflicts with First Nation understanding of the treaty relationship between First Nations and the Crown, whereby one sovereign nation cannot tax another.

"Both levels of government have an obligation to consult with First Nations if an Aboriginal and treaty right could be compromised," said Beardy.

NAN, together with First Nation leadership across Ontario, rejected the proposed HST introduced in the Ontario legislature Monday. If passed, the 13 per cent HST will add to the cost of many goods and services not previously taxed which will have devastating impacts on NAN First Nation communities.

"The proposed HST will put an additional burden on First Nation economies, further impoverishing NAN communities," said Beardy. "This will be hardest felt in by the people in our remote First Nation communities where two litres of milk can be $15 and the basic necessities of life are already beyond the means of the average family."

In addition, last week the Ontario government announced new point-of-sale exemptions to the HST.

"The Ontario government is creating new HST exemptions while at the same time taking ours away," said Beardy, adding that the provincial sales tax exemption for First Nations is a long-standing legislative exemption based on the special treaty and constitutional relationship between First Nation people and the Crown.

Nishnawbe Aski Nation is a political territorial organization representing 49 First Nation communities in James Bay Treaty 9 and Ontario portions of Treaty 5 – an area covering two thirds of the province of Ontario.

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For more information please contact *Michael Heintzman, Media Relations Officer – Nishnawbe Aski Nation (807) 625 4906 or (807) 621 2790 mobile.*