



# Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **PROMPTED BY EMPIRE, MOHAWKS BREAK FROM MONTICELLO CASINO PROJECT**

*Tribe Calls Empire's Move Betrayal*

**AKWESASNE-** The St. Regis Mohawk Tribe announced today that due to receipt of confirmation from Empire Resorts that it considered material partnership agreements to have expired on December 31, 2007 and because the company has now partnered with Louis Cappelli and the Concord Associates, it has formally parted ways with the former development partner and will not pursue a Sullivan County Mohawk casino at the Monticello Raceway. The Tribe was prompted to take its leave of the long sought after Catskills casino only after Empire officials notified the Tribe of its intention to strike up a deal with new partners on a new project last week.

The Tribe has now notified local officials and leaders in New York State and Congress, including the National Indian Gaming Commission of the Tribe's formal departure from the project. Additionally, the tribe has formally withdrawn its federal lawsuit against the Secretary of the Interior.

"We feel deeply betrayed by Empire Resorts and its management. We have trusted and worked side by side these people for three years overcoming one significant obstacle after another only to be stabbed in the back in the end," stated Tribal Chief Lorraine M. White. To add injury to insult, it has been announced that Donald Trump is seriously considering joining the Empire – Concord partnership. "It has been no secret that for the past 12 years, Donald Trump has been actively opposed to the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe's efforts to build a casino in the Catskills since such an enterprise would rival his Atlantic City interests," said Chief White. "The question that begs is, do you really think that Louis Capelli and Donald Trump would later roll out the welcome mat for the Mohawks and our Las Vegas style casino to compete alongside their proposed Entertainment City and VLT parlor? We think not."

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The Tribe received a letter from Empire on February 5, 2008 informing the Tribe of their intentions to “shut down” the Monticello Development office and cease important pre-development funding to the Tribe. The Tribe was never given the opportunity to review the proposed Concord partnership and never received any details regarding any potential involvement in the project as Empire’s SEC filings indicate.

The St. Regis Mohawk Tribal Council still firmly believes that it would have prevailed in their lawsuit against Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne, who last month issued new policy guidelines used to deny the Tribe’s land-into-trust application for a Sullivan County casino. As noted earlier, the Tribe has now withdrawn the complaint against Kempthorne.

The Tribal Council said it had every reason to believe it would have ultimately gained approval on its trust application, either through a favorable judicial determination or with a new presidential administration. One reason is that the new policy guideline attempts to establish a random “distance factor” for off-reservation gaming which was never formally adopted in accordance with federal law.

Some reports in the media have suggested that Empire Resorts was still willing to maintain a relationship with the Tribe and wanted to “work things out.” The Tribe argues that if this was the case, this conversation should have taken place long before Empire announced its choice of the Concord Associates over the Mohawks.

“There really wasn’t the full disclosure that one would expect. It was only within the last few days that Empire suggested that we engage in a ‘meaningful dialogue’—if you are in a committed, respectful relationship, communication is important. We didn’t get the courtesy of an honest, upfront conversation. Instead, they chose to hop into bed with another partner behind our backs,” said Tribal Chief Barbara Lazore.

The St. Regis Mohawk Tribal Council continues to closely evaluate the situation to determine whether legal steps are warranted.

“Clearly the people of Sullivan County deserve the sincere and unwavering commitment to a project that will result in brick and mortar reality. We believe that had Empire stuck to its guns, and honored its agreements with the Tribe, the Mohawks could have and would have delivered a highly successful casino that would have had far-reaching, long-term impacts benefiting the region and the state,” said Tribal Chief Lorraine White. “Now maybe we’ll never know what might have been.”

Chief Lazore added, “At this point we’re evaluating next steps. But this we know for sure: the marriage with Empire is over.”