



St. Regis Mohawk Tribe

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NEWS RELEASE

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Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe Hosts Area Business, Government Leaders *Tribal Leader Discusses Potential Settlement of Boundary Issues*

Akwesasne, NY - The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe welcomed a gathering of business and government leaders from Franklin and St. Lawrence counties and the surrounding area to the Akwesasne Mohawk Casino Resort last evening for a Business After Hours event co-hosted by the Malone Chamber of Commerce.

While the focus of the evening was networking and casual conversation among those in attendance, the topic of resolution of a series of issues related to the Tribe's boundary drew much attention.

"Our surrounding counties are very important to our Tribe, as both a business and as a government," said Chief Ron LaFrance. "The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council remains committed to a negotiated settlement that would benefit both the Mohawk people and our neighbors."

The Tribe would like to see the terms of a 2005 settlement agreement between the Tribe, New York State, Franklin County and St. Lawrence County enacted. The agreement would permit the Tribe to acquire, only from willing sellers, certain identified lands in Franklin and St. Lawrence counties and return them to the Tribe's territory. In exchange, the local communities would receive substantial benefits, which LaFrance outlined for those at last night's event.

Those benefits include local governments receiving payments from New York State equal to any lost property taxes for the lands the Tribe is able to acquire, and annual payments of \$1 million from New York State to both Franklin and St. Lawrence counties to be paid in perpetuity. Legislation proposed in 2005 increased the payment amount to \$2 million per year for each county. In addition to the direct economic incentives, the settlement would clarify questions related to building codes, jurisdiction, and police and fire services.

Resolving its boundary is a priority issue for the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe and the Tribal Council made that clear when it resolved its casino revenue share dispute with New York State in May. In resuming its payments to the State, payments which have exceeded \$86 million since 2005, the Tribe agreed to forego any legal arguments based on a non-licensed gaming facility in Plattsburgh in exchange for a resolution of the land boundary issues.

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“This basically means once our boundary issues are resolved, we have absolutely no basis to withhold future payments to the State without jeopardizing our right to conduct gaming under the Compact,” LaFrance explained. “From a business perspective alone, we would not jeopardize that income source. Our Tribe relies on the income to survive.”

Just as the status of the Tribe’s boundary and a potential settlement agreement is an issue that is important to the entire area, the gathering last night also highlighted the emergence of the regional economy.

Hugh Hill, Executive Director of the Malone Chamber of Commerce reinforced regional economic opportunities during his remarks, “Hospitality and tourism ranks as one of the greatest opportunities, and the remarkable achievements in that area by the Saint Regis Mohawk community are a sterling example of determination, hard work, sacrifice, vision. The result is what we see here today: A magnificent and successful world-class resort, with friendly top notch customer service, cuisine, gaming and entertainment in a beautiful setting. This resort is providing hundreds of jobs for local people, generating sales for local businesses and is an important part of a successful North Country economy.”

The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe is one of the North Country’s leading economic engines. The tribe currently employs more than 1,600 people at its various enterprises, including the Akwesasne Mohawk Casino Resort, with an annual payroll of \$47 million. The tribe has also worked with 244 vendors from Franklin County and 281 vendors from St. Lawrence County, thereby supporting hundreds of additional local jobs.

“The wages our employees earn, the money we spend with our local business partners and the visitors we attract all generate significant benefits that extend far beyond our tribe’s boundary,” LaFrance said. “The futures of the Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe and the surrounding communities are forever linked, and I believe the future is very bright.”

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The Saint Regis Mohawk Tribal Council is the duly elected and federally recognized government of the Saint Regis Mohawk People.