



Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe

Chief Barbara A. Lazore
Chief James W. Ransom
Chief Monica M. Jacobs
Sub-Chief Stacy A. Adams
Sub-Chief Ronald LaFrance Jr.
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PRESS RELEASE

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SUPREME COURT JUSTICE SCONIERS ISSUES TEMPORARY RESTRAINING ORDER

Cigarette Tax Collection Sidetracked

Akwesasne Territory— On December 24th, State Supreme Court Justice Rose Sconiers issued a temporary restraining order barring the state of New York from enforcing state tax law restricting the sale of unstamped cigarettes from being sold at the wholesale level to cigarette retailers on Indian reservations. Governor Paterson had recently signed the legislation to allow the state to collect sales tax on non-Indians purchasing cigarettes at Indian smoke shops. “This restraining order is a relief to us and as I’m sure it is other tribes in New York,” said Tribal Chief Barbara Lazore. “In the meantime, it will also give us a chance to sit down with the Governor to discuss this and other issues.” Governor Paterson has indicated his willingness to meet with tribes whose communities are located in New York.

“We are a major part of the North Country economy,” Said Tribal Chief James Ransom. “The backbone of any community is its small businesses. We are no different and our Tribal businesses contribute in significant ways to local and regional economies around us.” Almost two dozen retail businesses sell cigarettes on the reservation and they employ many workers as well as being most of their goods and services from neighboring communities. “

“Taxing cigarettes will not help the North Country or us,” said Chief Monica Jacobs. “We’re glad that Justice Sconiers has issued this restraining order because respecting tribal sovereignty is essential.” A 2006 tax law required all cigarettes sold on reservations to be tax stamped and imposed a coupon system. But the tax department never developed the coupon system, so the law could not go into effect.

“Revenues paid to the Tribe from local tobacco retailers help support various programs and services provided to tribal members where little or no state or federal funds are available,” noted Steve Cook, Director of Economic Development for the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe. “Just as important, business activity here at Akwesasne benefits the Malone and Massena economies.”

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

Helping Build A Better Tomorrow

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