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CHIEFS OF ONTARIO

PIC MOBERT FIRST NATION HOLDS RALLY CALLING FOR RECOGNITION AND RESPECT FOR TREATIES

February 26, 2010 – Chief Joanna Desmoulin and approximately 150 citizens of the Pic Mobert First Nation held a peaceful rally along Highway 17 between White River and Marathon yesterday as a show of protest against the imposition of the Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) on First Nations.

Chief Desmoulin and Pic Mobert citizens were joined by Ontario Regional Chief Angus Toulouse and Chief Roy Michano, of the Ojibways of Pic River. “I appreciate the leadership of Chief Desmoulin and the citizens of Pic Mobert to publicly say that this situation is not acceptable and we will not quietly go away,” said Chief Toulouse. Chief Toulouse indicated that the Batchewana First Nation and Garden River First Nation have also staged demonstrations recently in an effort to raise awareness and send the message that First Nations expect to be dealt with in a manner consistent with their Aboriginal and Treaty rights.

“As Indigenous nations, we have Aboriginal and Treaty rights in Canada that are being violated by the unilateral imposition of the HST. We have a nation-to-nation relationship with the Crown and there are specific obligations and expectations that flow from that relationship and we expect those obligations to be honoured by the Crowns,” said Regional Chief Toulouse.

Chief Toulouse indicates that both levels of government acted unilaterally in pursuing the HST in Ontario. They failed to discuss with First Nations that harmonizing the provincial retail sales tax with the federal goods and services tax would result in the elimination of the First Nations point of sale exemption.

He further explained that the province has shown the willingness to try to resolve the situation but that the federal government refuses to even sit down with First Nation leaders on the issue. “We’ve made requests to the federal Finance Minister but he has no time for us. The fact is that our citizens are already struggling. Many of our communities suffer from extraordinarily high rates of unemployment and poverty and the move to eliminate the point of sale exemption will only create further hardship,” stated Chief Toulouse.

The Chiefs of Ontario office, on behalf of the First Nations in Ontario, are organizing an additional rally in Ottawa on March 10, 2010 in order to demonstrate against the imposition of the HST, the lack of recognition for First Nations Aboriginal and Treaty rights, and to call on the federal government to deal fairly with First Nations.

For more information on the March 10 rally please visit www.coo.org or email Nathan@coo.org.