



CHIEFS OF ONTARIO

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FIRST NATIONS IN ONTARIO PLEASED THAT AGREEMENT REACHED TO CONTINUE THE POINT OF SALE EXEMPTION FOR FIRST NATIONS

TORONTO, ON - Yesterday Ontario Regional Chief Angus Toulouse received letters from Federal Finance Minister Flaherty and Ontario Ministers Bentley and Wilkinson confirming intergovernmental agreement for the continuation of the point of sale exemption for First Nations in Ontario. This means that First Nations in Ontario will not pay the 8% provincial portion of the 13% HST. While the full implementation of the point of sale exemption will come into effect on September 1, 2010; the Ontario government is putting into place special measures to provide timely refunds for First Nation purchasers upon the submission of receipts for the July and August period.

"I am thrilled and our people will be relieved that the point of sale exemption for First Nations will be continued within the HST framework. First Nations have worked tirelessly with Ontario and the federal government to make this a reality. The ability to achieve this reflects the great potential of the government to government relationship between Ontario and First Nations," stated Regional Chief Toulouse.

This achievement is a culmination of a sustained year-long effort by First Nations to ensure that their right to the point of sale exemption is recognized and accommodated. "First Nation leaders and First Nation citizens should be proud as our collective efforts have resulted in the achievement of an historic agreement between governments to continue the First Nation point of sale exemption," said the Regional Chief.

Under the agreement:

- First Nations citizens will be exempt at the point of sale from off-reserve purchases, upon showing their status card from September 1st onward. The two month delay is to enable retailers and governments to make the necessary changes to their systems to accommodate the exemption;
- Ontario and the federal government will be releasing in the coming days a Technical Backgrounder/Bulletin describing the scope and procedures for the First Nation point of sale exemption;
- For the months of July and August, First Nation citizens will be reimbursed the provincial portion of the HST upon the submission of receipts. Ontario will be releasing shortly a Memo/Bulletin outlining the procedures for the refund.

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“It became clear that the two month gap in the exemption, while certainly not what we wanted, would be impossible to avoid”, said Regional Chief Toulouse. First Nations understand this logistical challenge but continue to assert that tax immunity is a Treaty right which we have never ceded and continue to oppose all taxation of our people by other governments,” said the Regional Chief.

The Regional Chief expressed relief that a new tax will not be imposed on First Nations citizens, many of whom struggle at or below the poverty line. “I, and my fellow Chiefs, are greatly concerned for the wellbeing of our people. This concern is what has driven us from day one and we remain committed to protecting our people and our Treaty rights going forward,” stated Regional Chief Toulouse.

Quotes

“NAN communities can breathe a sigh of relief in knowing that they will not have to fork up even more money to cover the cost of essential goods and services. We are pleased that the historical practice of First Nations point-of-sale tax exemption will be maintained.” — Nishnawbe Aski Nation Grand Chief Stan Beardy.

“We are glad that we were able to bring Canada to the table to recognize that our rights are important to us. We are also glad that Ontario is recognizing our rights and I hope that our partnership will continue to be positive with other issues.” — Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Chief Patrick Wedahseh Madahbee

"I was quite happy to hear that an agreement was reached to continue the point of sale exemption for First Nations in Ontario. It is an example of how diplomacy can work when people are motivated to reach a solution." — Grand Chief Randall Phillips, Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians

“The citizens of Grand Council Treaty #3 that reside in Ontario should have confidence that every effort was taken to maintain this point of sale exemption,” stated Ogichidaakwe Diane Kelly, Grand Chief on behalf of 26 First Nations in Northwestern Ontario. "We were extremely fortunate to find a path towards protecting the property of our citizens which is a treaty right in Treaty #3. The point of sale exemption is key First Nations policy in Ontario and honours the commitment of the Crown to protect the interests of Treaty #3 communities as long as the sun shines and the grass grows, that is to say forever." — Ogichidaawke Diane Kelly, Grand Council Treaty #3

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