

Six Nations Band Council looking at distributing tobacco

By Donna Duric
Writer

Six Nations Band Council is looking at rescinding its plan to impose business registration fees here and setting up its own cigarette distribution system.

After a local business group told band council its new business registration system will impose taxes on them band council said they

would hold meetings with the business community and discuss getting rid of the quota system.

Council said Tuesday night, it wants to set up an arms length agency and distribution centre to distribute cigarettes here.

The move came after the Turtle Island Trade and Commerce member and local businesswoman Au-

drey Hill said the new system, which charges businesses a \$25-a-year registration fee, is akin to taxation. "Those fees can only be construed as a form of taxation," said Hill, who owns a lumber supply company with her husband. "Under the Indian Act, if the administrative body levies a fee or a fine, those things are considered a form of tax-

ation." She called on band council to rescind the move during the testy discussion.

Council says it created the new system because it is "determined to protect businesses from outside taxation as guaranteed by our treaty and inherent rights." Council says the previous recognition system, which consisted of a simple letter, failed to provide them with

enough information to advocate on behalf of Six Nations businesses who encountered problems with outside laws and taxes.

Councillor Helen Miller says the previous business recognition letter was used by businesses to simply get a cigarette quota and guesses that many of them don't even exist anymore.

"The old business recognition form ... the people would scribble a few words on it and that was it," said Miller. "Even though the previous letter of recognition said it wasn't to be used to get a cigarette quota, I suspect that's what most of the business owners used it for. It would be interesting to find out how many of the businesses council recognized over the past 15-20 years are actually still in business today."

Hill says businesses have told council they do not want a registration system on Six Nations. She says the new system basically registers Six Nations businesses with the federal government.

"Council is still a government body so registering our businesses with them is still going to ultimately result in our registering with the government," she said. Hill also said band council is not capable of protecting Six

Nations businesses from taxes because council is bound by the Indian Act.

"In that policy, they say they're going to protect us from outside taxes and our inherent rights and our treaty rights," said Hill. "Protecting our treaty rights and inherent rights cannot be done by a body that only exists under the Indian Act, which is a racist piece of legislation and serves as an administrative mechanism for the government. So how can council proclaim to protect those rights when they only exist under the Indian Act?"

She said, "The Indian Act itself is an instrument to oppress us. Their logic, their reasoning, is totally flawed. The idea that we're just going to pay a simple fee is an outrageous form of fraud."

The policy came into effect on April 1 this year. The policy states the old recognition letters will be valid for one year, until April 2014.

Hill says she is also uncomfortable with a section of the policy that states council's Senior Administrative Officer (Dayle Bomberry), "has the authority to, and shall, ensure that this policy is administered by designated staff." Hill says that gives the SAO too much power over Six Nations businesses.