

Resolution of Kanonstaton, former D.C.E. top priority for Ontario

By Donna Duric
Writer

Resolution of Kanonhstaton or the former Douglas Creek Estates, outside Caledonia, is a top priority with Ontario's new premier, newly appointed Aboriginal Affairs Minister David Zimmer told Six Nations Band Council last Friday.

Zimmer said he wants to see an early resolution to the outstanding land rights issue.

"That is something the Premier and I have talked about," said Zimmer. "With a new Premier in place we want to figure out a way to get that resolved asap. I've had some discussions, done research; if we could resolve the Douglas Creek file early on that would be a big, big achievement and a signal about the seriousness of this new



Ontario Minister of Aboriginal Affairs David Zimmer and Six Nations Elected Band Council Chief Bill Montour listen to questions at meeting with council last Friday. (Photo by Chase Jarrett)

government. That is a priority issue." The declaration came last Friday at council chambers where Zimmer, quietly brought into the community, met with the elected Chief, a handful of councillors and band department

heads. He refused to comment on whether or not the Confederacy Council would be included in the resolution of Six Nations land rights, including the former DCE. He said the provincial aboriginal affairs ministry has

no plans to meet with the Confederacy. "Not at this time," he said. Zimmer was appointed aboriginal affairs minister last month when former aboriginal affairs minister Kathleen Wynne became Premier.

Wynne had signed a historic communications agreement with the Confederacy last summer.

"I'm going to review the document she signed, talk with the Premier and go from there," said Zimmer. "I can't make commitments on my own. I can tell you that the new Premier, in her discussions with me, she made it very, very clear that she wants to advance and move the agenda along on aboriginal affairs. She's very, very serious about that. She's made this a stand-alone ministry. She realizes there's a whole lot of work to be done and my mandate from her is to give it my full-time attention."

Councillors Dave Hill and Melba Thomas pushed Zimmer to resurrect the land rights talks that started when Six Nations took over the former Dou-

glas Creek Estates in 2006. The talks fell apart when the Six Nations Band Council walked away from the table in 2010.

Councillor Carl Hill pressed Zimmer on compensation for Six Nations land rights. "You said want to work with Six Nations; when are you going to turn (DCE) back over to Six Nations?" asked Hill.

Zimmer said it will take time to move forward with Six Nations land rights. "I understand where you're coming from. We've been there for four weeks. This is the first step on the trip."

Councillor Daryll Hill asked Zimmer to get in touch with his federal counterpart, Bernard Valcourt, to get the federal government back to the land rights negotiation table, as well. "I'm hoping to have con-

(Continued on page 6)

Zimmer hears laundry list of issues from band council

(Continued from page 2)

versations with him soon," said Zimmer. "We have stresses and strains trying to get the federal government to sit down with us on exercising our joint responsibilities but we will keep pounding on the door."

Band Council presented Zimmer with a laundry list of concerns they want to see the ministry address, including land rights, policing, social assistance, roads, fire services, education and justice.

Zimmer said Wynne is "deadly serious" about moving forward with aboriginal issues and concerns. "She gave me a direction... that she wanted to really see a new relationship and

really opening the whole aboriginal file broadly on a whole host of issues," said Zimmer. "She particularly addressed issues here at Six Nations. She wants to see progress on a whole lot of issues in the ministry." Elected Chief Bill Montour said he is "cautiously optimistic."

"We gave (Zimmer) a whole list of issues that have to be dealt with," said Montour. "Let's be optimistic and move forward. Everybody has given us platitudes along the way and frankly, I'm sick of platitudes."

Montour said he's glad the provincial aboriginal affairs ministry is now a stand-alone ministry.

"I'm really pleased that she's seen the opportunity



Ontario Minister David Zimmer (Photo by Chase Jarrett)

of having a stand-alone ministry," said Montour.

He said Wynne is the only Premier in the province's history that held the abo-

original affairs portfolio.

"I think that's going to be a plus," said Montour.

Councillor Helen Miller said she wanted to see action on Six Nations' Ontario Works program, saying the community receives 50 per cent less funding to deliver social assistance programming on the territory compared to off-reserve.

"Six Nations is expected to implement the same Ontario Works program as the municipalities but not given the same tools or funding," said Miller. Zimmer heard that 50 per cent of Six Nations' social assistance recipients don't have a high school diploma. He pointed out the disparities in education between native and non-native stu-

dents.

On-reserve students get about \$4,000 less per year in funding compared to off-reserve students, which translates to \$50,000 over the course of the student's educational career, he said. That, in turn, leads to problems with unemployment and underemployment, he said. "In the long-term probably one of the best things we can do is provide higher quality education for aboriginal youth," said Zimmer.

Councillor Ava Hill questioned Zimmer about the Brantford Charity Casino sitting on Six Nations land. "We want our due share out of the Brantford Charity Casino," said Hill. "That is on a valid land claim. That casino sits on our land yet

when the money's divvied up the City of Brantford gets five per cent of the slots, the province gets millions, and Six Nations has gotten not one cent out of that casino."

Zimmer said he would look into that.

Well-known land rights activist Floyd Montour invited Zimmer to visit the Mohawk Workers at Kanata Village in Brantford, to which Zimmer agreed.

"I give you my public acceptance to have a visit," said Zimmer.

Zimmer was given a copy of the band's "Global Solution" booklet that details Six Nations' land rights. The elected Chief said he is will set up another meeting with the minister on issues raised by the band council.