

Six Nations dispute threatens agreement

OHSWEKEN — A hunting and fishing agreement between the province and traditional chiefs at Six Nations may have been jeopardized by the band council.

Last week, Six Nations band councillors sent a letter to Bud Wildman, Minister of Natural Resources, stating they did not support the committee negotiating the agreement with Ontario.

The committee, appointed by the Iroquois Confederacy, has been in discussions with the province for more than 18 months.

It stated, in part, that "the Six Nations Council does not support the Hudenushonnee of the Grand River as the lead negotiator of the hunting and fishing agreements."

Arnold General, an Onondaga chief and a member of the hunting committee, said the tentative agreement recognized the traditional beaver hunting grounds of the Iroquois, as outlined in a 1701 treaty made between Confederacy chiefs and the British.

But Coun. John Peters said there must have been an error when the letter was written.

The councillors didn't object to the Confederacy signing a hunting agreement with the province, he said, but to the wording of a letter from the province which asked if council would "allow" the traditional chiefs to sign the agreement.

The chiefs had been upset by similar statements in the past, he said. They protested that the band council has no jurisdiction over the Confederacy, and can't "allow" the chiefs to do anything.

"We had no intent of throwing a wrench into the whole works," said Mr. Peters. "We were concerned about the word 'allow' being written down."

The government cannot sign an agreement without the support of the band council, he said, because it must abide by the Indian Act.