

Ontario Minister visits Onondaga Longhouse

By Jim Windle

SIX NATIONS – Armed with marching orders from Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, Ontario Aboriginal Affairs Minister David Zimmer came to the Onondaga Longhouse at Six Nations Saturday with a personal invitation to join ongoing talks between Six Nations Elected Band Council, Haldimand County and Ontario regarding land issues, including the former Douglas Creek Estates land known by Six Nations as Kanonhstaton.

Zimmer reported that, in his estimation, the



Aboriginal Affairs Minister David Zimmer.

meeting with clan mothers and around 20 chiefs went well. He reported that the meeting with the Elected Council, Haldimand Council and the Province were

going well, but could be moving along much better with Confederacy participation.

It was Zimmer's second visit to the Longhouse since February.

"There has been engagement between the Haudenosaunee and the government of Ontario, and that's a very good thing," he told the Chiefs and Clan Mothers and those present.

"(Since 2006) we have met many times to discuss important issues, including the Nanfan Treaty, Burtch and, of course, the Douglas Creek Estates

land. We believe it's time to develop new, more inclusive ways to accomplish the desired outcomes."

He told the Chiefs and Clan Mothers that the door is open to them to participate and urged the Confederacy to accept the invitation.

Zimmer left a copy of his speech and remarks with the Chiefs, who promised to look over Zimmer's proposal and discuss whether they will accept and send a response as soon as they are able to find consensus.

The Chiefs already declined a similar offer made

last summer, and the talks began without their presence.

"We're going to have another leaders meeting soon and it's important that the Haudenosaunee Confederacy chiefs be at that table," Zimmer said. "We would like them to be there and I formally invited them."

He referred to the recent cleaning up of the Kanonhstaton site as a positive step, but suggested that more progress can be made with all the players at the table.

He took the opportunity to announce a newly

created economic development fund for aboriginal businesses worth a total of \$25 million.

"We're looking for three elements: to create local economic activity, to help First Nations create regional activity, like several First Nations working together, and to help First Nations diversify into things they might not have traditionally done."

Before leaving he encouraged Six Nations entrepreneurs to access this fund.