

GRE tells committee cut off raw supplies to unlicensed plants

(Continued from page 2)

He told the committee to take aim at the suppliers of the raw materials to the industry.

"I've never once heard that we should find out who supplies the raw materials to this industry and bring them to task," he told the committee.

He said "I don't know how you're going to be able to manufacture tobacco products if you can't source out the raw materials."

The Sago GRE report lists the kinds of materials that could be regulated and even mentions packaging and off reserve printers.

Under packing and printing the report says documentation available to investigators includes Names, addresses, bank accounts and volumes, lists possible tax fraud and copyright infringement.

He told the committee "when you have things like this happen—your product is being blatantly counterfeited and sold right in your own communities—it's discouraging."

He told the committee "Our company is a first nations manufacturer, and we took it upon ourselves to adhere to all those guidelines, only to be slapped in the face and have our prod-

uct counterfeited and put right on those same packs."

He issued a warning to First Nations communities over working with organized crime.

"In this public forum I would also warn all first nations communities that allowing the organized crime element to come into first nations territories is like allowing wolves in sheep's clothing into your communities."

He told them "I'm here to make you aware that you cannot make tobacco products without raw materials. It's only just recently, thank goodness, by the actions of the government that you've restricted tobacco machinery from getting into the hands of these operations. I applaud you for that. It was a great first move. Now take all of the other necessary steps to at least make sure that there's total transparency in the industry."

He said GRE is reinvesting in first nations communities. "You saw lacrosse arenas go up, the Ohsweken Speedway, gas stations, tech companies, and a lot of other spinoff and satellite companies that were owned by the directors or people who were working within the companies that were legally compliant."

He said he has watched that growth stagnate.

"I've watched that slowly diminish. I believe it's diminishing because a lot of the time these activities involve people who don't have first nations' agendas at heart. The money is leaving the country and going to other countries that participate in activities. I'm sure you have very good policing agencies; they can help you identify them."

He told the committee "It's very difficult to even speak in front of a committee when in the back of your mind you're thinking, 'Don't sell out your own people. Make sure you give your people the opportunity to go after some of that revenue stream too. It's all that your people have as a revenue stream. By the same token, as a first nations businessman, am I not entitled to a level playing field? Am I not entitled to play under the same rules as everybody else?'"

He said in the United States, "if you sell unstamped cigarettes for a second or third time, the punitive damages are unbelievable. They usually result in long-term incarceration. So you can't have a mellow environment and say, 'Well, we're looking out for the



GRE CEO Jerry Montour (right) and his report and GRE lawyer (and Jerry Montour's sister) Chantelle Montour at the Public Safety and National Security Committee meeting in May of 2008. (Supplied Photo)

rights of first nations people."

He describes the First Nations retail market saying "First nations retailers who are truly committed to building their own communities only have their products for sale on first nations territories. They don't choose to have their products sold into the mainstream."

He said First Nation youth are entitled to work in a manufacturing facility as long as tobacco is legal and recognized.

But he says "Do you want

them working in a facility where there are firearms at their feet because they have to fear the raids and they have to fear the aggression? Because they're desperate for those jobs, they allow themselves to work in those environments. Is that what you want for the youth?"

He asked the committee for help. "If you can help me with restricting the raw materials that go into these tobacco products and move toward legal recognition, you will truly make Canada a safer place."

Under questioning Mon-

tour told the committee "If you come to some reserves—for example, Six Nations—it looks like a war zone right now. It truly does not look like the Canada that we all want our first nations kids growing up in. It's not a normal environment for a young person to grow up in, and if they have to work in a tobacco factory that's unregulated, how does anybody know whether there are firearms and other things and activities in there? Nobody will be able to answer that."

He said he is not welcome in those factories.

MP Rick Norlock Northumberland—Quinte West, ON asked Montour.

"On Friday, May 9, there was an article in *The Hamilton Spectator* by Leroy Hill, secretary for the Six Nations traditional government, indicating that the first nations are developing their own laws to deal with tobacco issues. Have you heard anything about these intended laws - how they'll be enforced or who'll enforce them?"

Montour said "I know they're not in place right now, so it would be irresponsible of me to comment. If it's a work in progress, they need to apply it."