

Bill C-10 passes second reading, Senate sends to committee

By Donna Duric
Writer

Bill C-10 - the Tackling Contraband Tobacco Act - has passed second reading in the Senate.

And despite fears the bill was going to pass third reading and become law before the Senate breaks for the summer recess this Friday, Six Nations Elected Chief Ava Hill says she does not believe it will pass before them.

"I anticipate the hearings to be held in the fall," she said. The Senate passed the bill over to its Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee for review on June 18, but no hearing dates have been set.

"Once the hearing date is scheduled we will prepare our presentation and decide on our delegation," said Hill. Senator Jane Cordy (Independent) said last Wednesday she believes Hill should appear before the committee as a witness to speak about her concerns with the bill.

"I had the opportunity to speak with Six Nations Chief Ava Hill last week and she expressed the same frustration of not being consulted by the federal government," said Cordy. "She fears that Bill C-10's criminalization of the tobacco trade will hurt business on reserve."

Cordy said Senators should hear Hill's concerns before the bill passes.

"(Elected Chief Hill) feels ignored by the government in this matter and stated that it is the Six Nations' treaty right to regulate their own tobacco industry and not that of the federal government," Cordy told the Senate. "I encourage the committee that will study Bill C-10 to include the Six Nations Chief Ava Hill as a witness at the hearings when this bill is studied in committee. She can explain the effect the bill will have on her community and the jobs that may be lost on the reserve."

Cordy said Hill also told her there are fears that Bill C-10 will open the door to on-re-

serve taxation, that Bill C-10 will allow on-reserve confiscation of property; and that Bill C-10 will "criminalize First Nations business people."

Cordy said, "I believe these concerns should be addressed before the bill passes. It is our responsibility as senators to ensure that there are no unin-

tended consequences that would harm good business owners and their employees."

Conservative Senator Vernon White told the Senate that "contraband" tobacco contributes to organized crime.

"The unlawful production, distribution and sale of cigarettes in Canada have

reached significant levels in recent years, creating challenges for public health officials, law enforcement, tax authorities, policy-makers and the public," said White. "Contraband tobacco is a threat to the public safety of Canadians, our communities and our economy. It fuels the growth of organized crimi-

nal networks, contributing to the increased availability of illegal drugs and guns in our communities.

Kris Green, of the Haudenosaunee Trade Collective, said the "HTC would have preferred for Bill C-10 to be amended or rejected by the Senate, but we are pleased that it was sent to the Constitution and Legal

Committee."

She said the "HTC will continue its work in opposing Bill C-10 and wants an opportunity to present at the committee. We need to educate the government on the importance of tobacco and negative impacted that C-10 will have on our community."