

Gas card compliance soon mandatory

by Andrea Buma

SIX NATIONS - As of May 1st, 1998, the Motor, Fuels and Tobacco Tax Branch of the Ministry of Finance of Ontario is enforcing the use of gas cards on Six-Nations and New Credit territories.

Pat Doherty, senior manager with the agency, explains that the use of gas cards has been required on all reserves except Six Nations and New Credit for several years now.

He says that the ministry met many times with then-chiefs Steve Williams and Larry Sault, who kept asking for delays because not everyone had gas cards. Doherty said that the main delay was because of Six

Nations, but the government also granted leniency to New Credit because of their proximity to the larger community.

Chief Staats says that Six Nations fought against the enforcement of the use of gas cards for so long because people in the Confederacy did not believe in applying for the cards, but should still be able to buy gas tax-free.

Staats says the provincial government has finally told council that there would be no more extensions. The government said that the decision was

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not political, simply that they needed to have everyone follow the rules so they could keep better records with a new computer system.

Staats says that he does not think that there is a problem on Six Nations with non-Natives buying gas tax-free, and he doesn't believe that this is behind the government's crackdown.

Doherty, however, says that "a minority of Six Nations retailers are selling gas tax-exempt to non-Natives."

Doherty says that the Ministry of Finance will allow for a transi-

tion period, after which refunds could potentially be disallowed, unless vouchers are turned in with gas cards imprinted on them, "like a credit card."

The ministry has sent out notices to all retailers, letters to band councils, and advertised in local papers, says Doherty, "so this should come as no surprise to the community."

"The whole purpose of the gas cards is to protect the integrity of the system for the benefit of the Aboriginal people it was intended to benefit," says Doherty.