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## CHIEFS OF ONTARIO

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### **FIRST NATIONS IN ONTARIO STRONGLY OPPOSE THE IMPOSITION OF THE HARMONIZED SALES TAX**

**Toronto, ON** - Ontario Regional Chief Angus Toulouse today announced that First Nations in Ontario reject the harmonized sales tax (HST) introduced in the Ontario legislature yesterday.

“Both the provincial and federal governments failed to consult with First Nations prior to announcing their intent to harmonize the taxes in spite of the fact that First Nations will be significantly impacted” said Regional Chief Toulouse, adding that both levels of government have an obligation to consult with First Nations on any action that may infringe upon an Aboriginal or Treaty right.

If passed, the harmonized sales tax would combine the eight per cent provincial sales tax with the five per cent federal goods and services tax. This means many goods and services that were not previously taxed will be done so at 13 per cent.

“The fact of the matter is that it is individuals and families that will bear the brunt of this new tax. Many of our citizens and families are already living at or below the poverty line; it is a well known fact that the First Nations population is one of the most vulnerable and marginalized in society” said Grand Chief Randall Phillips of the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians, adding his concern that this tax will add to the burden that many First Nation families are already experiencing. Phillips added that the September 18, 2009 Special Report prepared by Toronto-Dominion Economics on the impacts of sales tax harmonization is further evidence that ultimately it is the consumer that will carry a heavier burden in making up for the lost revenue.

“Ontario and Canada have publicly pledged their commitment to helping eradicate First Nations poverty, but this cash grab will contribute to it. We have been working with the province to help recover our rightful share of the resource wealth that we agreed to share in the Treaties; there was never any agreement that First Nations pay taxes to any other nation” said Anishinabek Grand Council Chief Patrick Mahdahbee, who represents 42 First Nations in Ontario.

“The proposed harmonized sales will place an additional burden on First Nation economies, further impoverishing many of the people of Nishnawbe-Aski” said Grand Chief Stan Beardy who represents 49 First Nation communities in Treaty 9 and Treaty 5 territory – an area spanning James and Hudson Bays to Manitoba. “This will be hardest felt in our remote First Nation communities where two litres of milk can be \$15 and the basic necessities of life are already beyond the means of the average family.”

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“The First Nations will hold government accountable for the commitments they have made. You cannot pay lip service to improving relationships between First Nations and governments one day and the next day completely disregard our rights and the interests of our people,” said Ogichidaawke Diane Kelly, Grand Chief of the 28 First Nations of the Grand Council Treaty #3, further indicating that the First Nations in Ontario have been working in good faith with the government of Ontario to resolve this situation to no avail.

Ontario Regional Chief Angus Toulouse emphasized that the First Nations will fight the implementation of the HST. He indicated that the First Nations in Ontario are one group of many that oppose the HST and are willing and prepared to work with other like-minded individuals and parties to oppose the HST.

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