



*Tsi Nahò:ten Karihwanákere Nó:nen'k*

# PRESS RELEASE

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## Mohawk Council responds to Parliamentary Standing Committee's decision on Bill C- 218

### For immediate release

**(Kahnawake – 29, Enniskó:wa/March 2021)** The Mohawk Council of Kahnawà:ke (MCK) wishes to advise that it has received notice that the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights has unanimously voted last Thursday (March 25<sup>th</sup>) to recommend to Parliament an amended version of Bill C-218. The amendment will protect the horse racing industry from the effects of legalizing single event sports wagering. However, the Standing Committee ignored the MCK's request to include an additional amendment to protect the interests of Kahnawà:ke and other Indigenous communities.

Council Chiefs made both written and oral representations to the Standing Committee requesting an amendment that would provide First Nations who have been historically ostracized by provinces, an opportunity to deal directly with the Federal government. The Committee's rejection of Council's proposed amendment further entrenches the injustice to First Nations resulting from a 1985 agreement in which Canada purported to sell the authority over gaming to the provinces—without consulting with or taking into consideration the interest of First Nations.

If Parliament accepts the Standing Committee's suggested amendment, it will be a further stain on the honour of the Crown.

Council Chiefs are concerned that justice and human rights were not given proper consideration by the Standing Committee because of pressure exerted by big business to rush Bill C-218 through deliberations before a general election is called.

"We are pleased that the horse racing industry successfully made its case," said Ietsénhaienhs (Council Chief) Gina Deer. "However, it is a sad indictment on Canada's parliamentary process that a Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights responded to the pleas of an elite group of millionaire and billionaire racehorse breeders to protect their control of horse betting but was not moved to protect the economy of a community of indigenous people with limited access to clean drinking water and residing on contaminated land."

"Minister Lametti told us that Kahnawà:ke's gaming industry was *world-class, legitimate and that it should be supported*," she continued. "Prime Minister Trudeau urged us to work with Minister Lametti to find "workable solutions" to assist Kahnawà:ke's gaming industry. Sadly, their words have proven to be meaningless."

"When the Federal Government sold its gaming rights to the provinces for \$100m in 1985 it deepened the inequality that exists in our society," added Ratsénhaienhs (Council Chief) Mike Delisle, Jr. "The Standing Committee had the opportunity to address this inequity by accepting our suggested amendment to Bill C-218. The Committee refused to do so. Why does the government of Canada treat First Nations as being less worthy of support than the breeders of racehorses?"

"The way that this matter has been handled by the Prime Minister, Minister Lametti and the Standing Committee not only raises doubts about their commitment to Truth and Reconciliation but also raises serious concerns about their suitability to implement the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* into Canadian law," stated Ratsénhaienhs Ross Montour. "The Prime Minister clearly favours big business over First Nations. I have serious doubts that he and Minister Lametti can be trusted to uphold UNDRIP's values and objectives."