



The Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe Of Michigan

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Attribute the following statement to Frank Cloutier, Chief, Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe

THE SAGINAW CHIPPEWA TRIBE APPLAUDS DECISION TO DENY OFF-RESERVATION CASINOS IN LANSING AND HURON TOWNSHIP

Today, the U.S. Department of the Interior issued a decision denying the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe's application to take lands into trust for building casinos in Lansing and Huron Township. In so doing, the Interior Department rejected the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe's claim that that the Michigan Indian Land Claims Settlement Act mandated that the Interior Department to take these lands into trust. Similar arguments by the Bay Mills Indian Community under the same law were also rejected by the Interior Department.

"We applaud the Interior Department for their well-thought out decision that the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe cannot mandate the agency to take lands into trust for gaming purposes anywhere they want to in Michigan. The parcels of land that the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe was trying to have taken into trust are located more than 300 miles from their current reservation in the Upper Peninsula.

"The Interior Department's decision affirms our longstanding position that the Michigan Indian Land Claims Settlement Act does not provide the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe with authority to shop for lands anywhere in the State merely to build a casino.

"Let's be clear -- the U.S. Department of Interior has simply re-affirmed what we have been saying all along -- the Sault Tribe has no legal right to pursue a casino in Lansing and Romulus. It was only six months ago that the Sault Tribe and Mayor Bernero expressed their confidence in getting a favorable ruling from the Department of Interior -- nothing could be farther from the truth.

“Since this process started over five years ago -- the Sault Tribe and Mayor Bernero have continued to mislead the people of Lansing. The facts are unmistakable-- their applications have no merit and the Department of Interior has rejected all of their arguments.

“Mayor Bernero was wrong when he indicated several years ago that this process would take a few months; he was wrong when he said that Interior would approve the applications; and he is wrong now to expect any different future outcome in what has been an ill-advised scheme to circumvent well established federal law governing Indian gaming. We always anticipated that the Interior Department would reject these applications. Now that they have, we hope that the leadership of Lansing will move onto other matters.

“We recognize that this is not the decision that the Sault Tribe was hoping for and that they will likely continue to fight for this frivolous effort rather than focus on issues impacting their local community. We will also continue to use any legal, regulatory or legislative efforts to protect our interests to maintain the current system of tribal gaming that is conducted with integrity and transparency. We believe the courts will rule the same as the Department of Interior. This decision is a win for tribes committed to the integrity of Indian gaming and for the citizens of Michigan who should not have to worry about casinos being dropped into the middle of their neighborhoods.”

Please contact Erik Rodriguez, Interim Public Relations Director, at (989) 775-4076 or at erodriguez@sagchip.org for more information.

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