



***For Immediate Release***

## **Bell customers on hold for one year: Madahbee**

UOI OFFICES (Nipissing FN) November 1, 2011– It's been a full year since the Ontario government directed businesses in the province to respect the treaty rights of their First Nations customers, but Bell Canada still has many of them on hold.

"We hear from our First Nation citizens on a weekly basis about tax exemptions that are not being honoured by retailers and telecommunication companies," says Anishinabek Nation Grand Council Chief Patrick Madahbee. "The point-of-sale exemption for the Provincial Sales tax portion of the Harmonized Sales Tax was confirmed on Nov. 1, 2010. How does anyone justify ignoring the law a year later?"

First Nations citizens living near the Quebec/Ontario border say their telephone service providers are really giving them the runaround.

Since the 13% HST was implemented on July 1, 2010, First Nation telecommunications customers have been entitled to the HST exemption if they live on reserve and exemption of the 8% PST portion of the HST if they live off-reserve. This applies to First Nations that are on the Ontario/Quebec border. But this is not apparently the case for some Eagle Village First Nation residents near Temiscaming, Quebec, who are being charged HST by Bell Mobility for their cellphones, but not by Bell Canada for their landlines.

A Bell Mobility customer service representative hung up on an employee of the Union of Ontario Indians who was inquiring about the HST exemption for border communities.

A Revenue Canada memo says customers living in Eagle Village First Nation are entitled to receive the HST exemption from Bell Mobility.

"It's the inconsistencies with Bell Canada that are really annoying," says Madahbee. "It seems to depend on who you're talking to at Bell whether we get the exemption or not."

The Ontario Revenue Agency states that those eligible for all or part of the HST exemption are:

- Status Indians who are from an Ontario First Nations reserve (including a reserve that straddles the Ontario-Quebec border),
- Status Indians who reside in Ontario, or
- An Indian band or council of a band of an Ontario First Nations reserve (including a reserve that straddles the Ontario-Quebec border).

Bell Canada asked First Nations customers off reserve to send copies of their certificates of Indian Status and a refund form to FAX number 1-877-338-3013 and using the request form

<http://support.bell.ca/Documents/General/Other/taxexempt%28en%29.pdf?ver=7.0>

To report a retailer not honouring the PST exemption, call the Ministry of Revenue 1-866-668-8297.

The Anishinabek Nation established the Union of Ontario Indians as its secretariat in 1949. The UOI is a political advocate for 39 member communities across Ontario, representing approximately 55,000



people. The Union of Ontario Indians Ontario and can trace its roots back to existed long before European

*Anishinabek*

is the oldest political organization in the Confederacy of Three Fires, which contact.

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