



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 16, 2018

Chippewas of the Thames First Nation Bans Provincial Sales of Cannabis

(London) Ontario—Chief Myeengun Henry, of Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, says that the First Nation has decided to ban delivery of recreational cannabis to the reserve to limit provincial sales of the drug on reserve.

“Provincial sales of cannabis are not welcome on the territory at this time. We want an agreement with Ontario that results in the province stepping away from assertions of jurisdiction on our territory. It is our place and our responsibility to regulate how businesses, including cannabis, are carried out on this reserve, and not the province”, according to Chief Henry. “We need to look no further than the tobacco sales on reserve in Ontario to see where we could end up with cannabis if the province and First Nations do not come together to address this”.

The federal government has left the regulation of recreational cannabis to the provinces, but First Nations reserves are considered federal lands. The issue is whether provincial cannabis laws apply on reserve. Chippewas of the Thames has spent the past five years examining these same issues through a tobacco pilot project with the Ontario government to research tobacco self-regulation on reserve and even reached an Agreement in Principle (AIP) with the Province.

The AIP was backed by research that has shown that these regulatory issues are not uncommon, and that in other jurisdictions the regulatory gaps can be overcome by way of agreement, such as Washington State in the United States. “Representatives from Chippewa travelled to Washington State, and were able to see the economics benefits for tribes in the U.S, but also living up to the agreements meant a reduction in contraband sales, increase public safety, and this leads to other positive economic opportunities. This is what we want for our people”, according to Chief Henry.

While the First Nation is banning provincial sales on reserve by blocking delivery, Chief Henry wants to ensure that Band Members know that this is not the long-term position. “Ontario’s cannabis laws do allow for the province and the First Nation to enter into arrangements for First Nations’ self-regulation. We have been working on a tobacco law and are now undertaking an interim cannabis law, but we still have a lot of work ahead of us. Having our own regulations is the answer here but we still advise Band Members that selling cannabis, recreational or medical, without a license is illegal”.

For Further Information Please Contact:

Rolanda Elijah at reljah@cottfn.com