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**Statement by the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI regarding Initiative to Regulate Online Gaming**

**Charlottetown, PEI, November 28, 2014 ---**

The Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI is clarifying its role in an initiative to regulate online gaming.

“The topic of our involvement in efforts to give PEI a substantial role in the regulation of online gaming in Canada has been much discussed in the Legislature and in the media,” said MCPEI Executive Director, Don MacKenzie. “It is important that the public have a clear understanding of our role as a partner in this initiative.”

The Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI, on behalf of the Abegweit and Lennox Island First Nations, approached the Provincial government in 2008 in relation to partnering on an initiative to regulate online gaming. The project was to serve the dual role of protecting the public from unregulated internet gaming companies, and generating tax revenue for both the Mi'kmaq and Provincial governments.

Funding for health, social and education programs have been capped for the past 18 years, despite the significant changes to the cost of living and the rapidly growing First Nations population. The Mi'kmaq Governments have been exploring all opportunities to generate own-source revenue to fulfill the service needs of PEI First Nations.

In 2009, a partnership between the two levels of government was struck to explore the viability of setting up a regulatory framework, which was no small task. MCPEI saw the project as having great potential. Since other jurisdictions in North America have been exploring a similar regulatory model, there was a competitive advantage that needed to be protected and the initiative proceeded with a high degree of confidentiality.

There was, and continues to be, a significant need to regulate online gaming in North America, so this project had considerable potential and represented a real opportunity for the First Nations and the Province to work together for mutual benefit. The only regret on the part of MCPEI is that it was not implemented.

As the initiator of the project, MCPEI obtained conditional funding from Innovation PEI to retain legal, regulatory and technical professionals to do the necessary work to pursue the initiative. A great deal of time, effort and energy was invested to move the project forward. The conditions of the Innovation PEI funding were that funds would be repaid from the revenue generated once the regulatory regime started operations.

Unfortunately this did not happen, and neither MCPEI nor the First Nations has any unpaid debt.

“The two levels of government tried in good faith to make an important project happen that would serve the interests of the Mi'kmaq and all Islanders,” said Don MacKenzie. “It is very unfortunate that, due to legal technicalities and the distinct jurisdictional roles of the Federal and Provincial Governments, the initiative was not successful.”

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