



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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SEAWAY INTERNATIONAL BRIDGE CORPORATION TOLL INCREASE AN ADDITIONAL BARRIER TO AKWESASNE

It is with disappointment that the Akwesasne community reacts to the April 1, 2024, announcement from the Seaway International Bridge Corporation (SIBC) regarding a substantial toll hike on the vital bridge linking our communities. This decision is a regressive move that increases the hardship of our members and stands contrary to the principle of reconciliation.

The SIBC must understand that such toll increases impose a significant burden on the people of Akwesasne. The bridge is not merely a route of travel; it is a connection between Akwesasne and neighboring communities, friends, and essential services. By choosing to heighten the financial strain to Akwesasne, the corporation directly impairs our community's economic prosperity.

Grand Chief Abram Benedict expressed his concerns:

"For over two years during the pandemic, the only traffic using the international crossing was Akwesasne members. The Federal Bridge Corporation (FCBL) and the Seaway International Bridge Corporation found alternatives to finance the operations. The justification of having to be self-sustaining via toll collection doesn't align with their previous actions and doesn't acknowledge the hardship the toll places on Akwesasne's ability to grow a sustainable economy. This increase is an economic embargo in disguise and it is not an April Fool's joke."

The Akwesasne community sees this decision as a failure to understand the real impacts that the toll and its increases have on Akwesasne and partnership abilities. The bridge toll is viewed as more than a financial barrier; it is a division imposed between our people and local non-indigenous communities, and it diminishes accessibility to employment and economic opportunities, which are essential for the growth and prosperity of any community.

Furthermore, viewing the potential toll revenue as paramount over the prosperity and the accessibility of our community is counterintuitive to the genuine spirit of reconciliation. Economic strategies cannot come at the expense of human rights and the honest attempt to build bridges between cultures, businesses, and governments.

The Mohawk Council of Akwesasne calls on the Seaway International Bridge Corporation and the Federal Bridge Corporation to consider the broader social and economic ramifications of their decision-making.

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