

# Local News

## St. Regis Road, McGee Road To Get Overhauls

by Doug Buchanan

AKWESASNE - Construction is well underway on one of Akwesasne's most extensive road projects to date. According to St. Regis Mohawk Tribal Planning Director Pat Thomas, while the current detour around St. Regis Road may be a source of irritation to many local residents, the project will yield huge benefits for years to come.

Drivers forced to take the narrow, pothole-ridden McGee Road detour while St. Regis Road is closed for construction are confused over what is actually happening on the project, not to mention future plans to fix up the McGee Road itself.

"These are going to be high standard roads," promised Thomas, who added that, upon completion, both roads will easily be able to accommodate any vehicle from a bicycle to an 18-wheeler.

The roads, according to project specifications, will each have 11-foot wide lanes with three- to four-foot shoulders. The roads will be crowned to handle runoff, which will be diverted to storm drains--not into residential basements, as has previously been the case.

Any trees uprooted during construction will be replaced at the

end of the project, while leftover fill will be given to local residents. The roads themselves will be extensively graded and topped with six inches of heavy duty asphalt.

The above specifications are in compliance with New York State regulations for state roads. This will be a welcome change from the hilly, pockmarked St. Regis Road residents are used to.

While most would agree that both of the roads in question have been in dire need of major repairs, some feel that the McGee Road, which now serves as the only route in and out of St. Regis Village, should have been handled first.

According to Thomas, however, St. Regis Road had to come first. The bridge on this road was on the verge of being condemned. Additionally, a Department of Transportation report indicated that the traffic volume on St. Regis Road is only two percent less than that of Route 37 during peak hours.

Construction on the faulty bridge is currently underway and is the cause of St. Regis Road's current closure. This phase of the project, however, should be completed within four weeks, after which the road will

again be opened to one-way traffic, which will be maintained by flagmen.

Completion of the entire St. Regis Road project is expected by the end of the current construction year, if good weather holds out long enough. Following this, construction on the McGee Road may start as early as May or June of next year, according to Thomas.

In the meantime, she said, "public safety has to be maintained at all times." This includes strict enforcement of a 35 mile per hour speed limit on McGee Road and frequent applications of mulch (tar and

crushed asphalt) on problem areas until construction begins on that project.

The combined cost for both projects will be around \$4 million, with design costs covered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs and construction costs paid by New York State.

While Roundpoint Construction is the primary subcontractor for the St. Regis Road project, Thomas explained that there will be another round of bid proposals accepted for the McGee Road project.

## Cornwall to Pay Taxes to MCA

Kanatakon: At the general meeting, Grand Chief Russell Roundpoint undated the community on a meeting he attended with the Seaway. The meeting included the petition presented at the last general meeting about the moving of the toll booth to the South side, bridge passes, the assessment of taxes on Cornwall Island property by the City of Cornwall and expropriated land. Grand Chief Roundpoint said the bridge pass issue should be settled within three months. A prototype bridge pass which allows for a bridge pass recipient to have more than one pass is presently being developed. Who gets a bridge pass will be brought to the community for input. The St. Regis Tribal Council and the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs have been involved with the bridge pass issue.

The Grand Chief discovered at this meeting that Cornwall has been assessing property tax on Cornwall Island property. The tax has been paid to the City of Cornwall for the past 7 years. The Grand Chief has the MCA Justice department investigating this issue and the investigation will also include Central Gas and

Canada Customs. According to the Grand Chief, "these taxes should be paid to Ahkwesasne and not the City of Cornwall." The Seaway officials were also told that a percentage of the tolls and the shipping tonnage tolls should be given to the Mohawk community.

The Seaway did agree to discuss property and negotiate an item of concern to the MCA Council and Mohawk residents on Kawehnoke. There are Kawehnoke residents who are living on land not considered Indian territory. Some of these people want to get a mortgage loan from the Bank of Montreal and are unable to do so because their land is not "theirs" but expropriated land of the Seaway. Grand Chief Roundpoint said this was one issue that could be resolved. Chief Delormier informed the people that the Seaway still has claims on Kawehnoke lands, especially bay areas, which have been filled in by the Seaway. There are Mohawks living in these areas. Chief Delormier said he would keep the community updated on these lands.

by Kawehnihe

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