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For Immediate Release

PEI Mi'kmaq Chiefs object to the sale of Mill River Crown Land

Charlottetown PEI, --- January 12, 2017

The Mi'kmaq First Nation Governments of Abegweit and Lennox Island are shocked and thoroughly disappointed to hear that the Provincial Government is proceeding with the sale of the Provincial Crown Land that includes the Mill River Golf Course and Mill River Provincial Park. The First Nations have repeatedly stated, both verbally and through formal correspondence, the objection of the PEI Mi'kmaq to the conveyance of the over 400 acres of Provincial Crown land. On several occasions the Mi'kmaq Governments have advised the Province that a sale would impact negatively on the constitutionally protected Aboriginal and Treaty rights of the Mi'kmaq People. In addition, the Mi'kmaq have asserted Aboriginal title to all of Prince Edward Island.

In 2014, the Supreme Court of Canada released the *Tsilhqot'in* decision that related to Aboriginal title to land. The law clearly set out that in cases involving Aboriginal title the government, both federal and provincial, must obtain the consent of the Indigenous People prior to moving forward with a conveyance or activity over the subject lands. Regrettably, the Province has chosen to move forward without addressing any title issues raised by the PEI Mi'kmaq, and has also wholly failed in its constitutional duty respecting meaningful consultation and accommodation. The subject lands in the Mill River area are traditionally and culturally significant to the Mi'kmaq, thus the sale of such a large parcel of land without securing consent is unacceptable and inconsistent with the law.

“This is a sad day for the Indigenous Mi'kmaq People of PEI and for our relationship with the Provincial Crown”, said Abegweit First Nation Chief Brian Francis. “The Province has talked about working with the Mi'kmaq in good faith and through a respectful and meaningful process, however, it appears that this was not sincere and that they are content to carry on with no concern for our rights or upholding the Honour of the Crown.”

“The PEI Mi'kmaq have long sought to address our issues regarding the sale and transfer of Crown land through good faith negotiations and through building a strong partnership with other Orders of Government,” said Chief Matilda Ramjattan. “However, we were always prepared to litigate if we felt that our rights were not being upheld or respected by the Crown. We wanted a meaningful partnership and fair process, but in the end we were simply ignored – there has been no accommodation whatsoever of our rights or interests”.

“We will have to take all steps necessary to protect the Aboriginal and Treaty rights of the Mi'kmaq People and will be forced to examine litigation, including injunctive relief to prevent the sale”, added Francis.

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