**FIRST NATIONS MUST BE CONSULTED PRIOR TO CASINO CLOSURES**

Dec. 18, 2020

(Treaty 6 Territory, Saskatoon SK) – The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) Executive says it is imperative that First Nations are consulted by the Province prior to the implementation of public health orders that significantly impact and negatively affect First Nations communities and businesses.  All casinos in Saskatchewan are set to close Saturday and remain closed until January 15th.

“Our First Nations communities are the beneficiaries of the revenues generated by SIGA casinos operating across the Province and these closures are having substantial and potentially lasting impacts within the First Nations,” says FSIN Chief Bobby Cameron.  “SIGA understands the seriousness and importance of doing their part to combat the spread of COVID-19 and they have respected and followed provincial guidelines, going above and beyond to keep everyone safe.  Our casinos have some of the highest health and safety regulations for this reason.”

All SIGA casinos have been exemplary in ensuring safety of staff, patrons and the broader public.  SIGA implemented a strict ‘mandatory mask’ program in all of its’ casinos months before public health made them mandatory. In addition, SIGA has imposed rules that curtail all social interaction, including directional pathways and a reduced number of available slot machines, which are separated by appropriate spacing and Plexiglas dividers. These restrictions allow for more space for a limited number of patrons. Our SIGA casinos have proposed to operate at a very safe limit of 12% of facility capacity, in comparison to 25 or 50% limits placed on other enterprises in Saskatchewan.

“Our First Nations deserve fair and equitable treatment and opportunity as other businesses in the province,” says Chief Cameron. “Other gaming machines like VLTs which are hosted in Saskatchewan hotels, bars and restaurants remain open.  SIGA, and the 1,000 employees who are going to be out of work, simply seek a level playing field.”

The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations represents 74 First Nations in Saskatchewan. The Federation is committed to honouring the spirit and intent of the Treaties, as well as the promotion, protection and implementation of the Treaty promises that were made more than a century ago.

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