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SENECA NATION  
**Council seeks casino loan data**

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The Seneca Nation Tribal Council has passed a resolution demanding to see a copy of the full loan agreement used to build the Seneca Niagara Casino in Niagara Falls.

The council approved the \$80 million loan agreement more than a year ago based on a summary but has never seen the full document, said Michael L. John, the tribal councilor who sponsored the resolution.

The Seneca Niagara Gaming Corp., the corporation the tribe founded to run the casino, has the loan document but has failed to respond to informal requests for a copy, John said.

"We've asked several times, but nothing has come forward," John said. "We've been patient."

John criticized the loan's interest rate - which starts at 29 percent and is adjustable upward - nearly a year ago.

Seneca Nation President Rickey L. Armstrong Sr. acknowledged that concern about the interest rate was one of the factors behind the council's recent decision.

"It sent up some flags," Armstrong said, adding that some Senecas asked: "What is going on here?"

A company backed by Malaysian billionaire Lim Kok Thay lent the money for the casino construction. And when the loan's terms became public, Seneca leaders defended the loan as the only deal they could get at a time when they didn't even have all the necessary federal approvals for the casino.

Armstrong said that, with the casino open and thriving, now is a good time for the council to get more details on

the gaming operation. The council merely wants "to check the pulse of its decision," Armstrong said.

Mickey Brown, the professional casino operator who runs the Seneca Niagara Casino, said the loan agreement was in the hands of the tribe's lawyers, who can forward it to the council.

The resolution, which the council passed Jan. 29, called for the loan agreement to be forwarded to the council by last Wednesday. But John said that deadline was unrealistic, and he expected to be able to see the loan documents sometime later this week.

The council also passed a resolution, sponsored by John, that would limit individuals other than the tribal president to sitting on only one of the boards of directors that oversee the tribe's casinos. In addition to Niagara Falls, a Seneca casino will open in Salamanca this spring, and another is set for somewhere in Erie County.

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