



Dennis Bevington MP Western Arctic Fall 2006 newsletter

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Dear Constituents,

It has been an incredibly busy and exciting summer. Between June and August, I visited 19 NWT communities. It was wonderful to meet with so many of you to hear your concerns and gather input for this Fall session of Parliament.

As Northerners, we have so many challenges and obstacles in front of us, such as the difficulties that we all face as a result of our high cost of living; worries over the environmental and socio-economic impacts of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline; and devolution and resource-revenue sharing, among others. With the support of the NDP caucus, I will do my utmost to ensure these and other Northern issues are ad-

dressed. It is pertinent to work together to identify our needs in order to get them addressed at the federal level.

I would like to thank you for your warm welcomes and first rate hospitality this summer. I will do my best to get into more of our communities in the near future.

Thank you, merci, mahsi cho!

**Dennis Bevington, MP
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Dennis discusses the resolutions being debated at the 22nd NDP Policy Convention with Western Arctic and Nunavut delegates. The NDP's second largest convention in history was held September 8-10 in Quebec City.



Dennis attended the Dene National Assembly on the Hay River Reserve with NDP Leader Jack Layton and his wife, MP Olivia Chow.



Jack chats with Kiera Kolson of the Native Women's Association of the NWT about issues of importance to Northern youth.

NDP leader Jack Layton takes NWT summer tour

In late July, NDP Leader Jack Layton headed to the Northwest Territories for the third time in just over a year.

Accompanied by his wife, Member of Parliament Olivia Chow, and Western Arctic MP Dennis Bevington, Layton kicked off his visit as man of the hour at a July 21 fundraiser for the Centre for Northern Families, the Side Door Youth Drop-in Centre and the Western Arctic NDP Riding Association.

Entitled "TGIF with Jack and Olivia," the night was an overwhelming success, raising a net profit of \$4,814 – half of which was split between the two non-profit beneficiaries of the evening to assist with youth programs.

The following day Chow met with representatives of the YWCA, Native Women's Association of the NWT, Status of Women Council of the NWT and the Yellowknife Women's Society to discuss child care and other issues affecting Northern women.

On July 23, they headed off to Fort Simpson to meet with Dehcho leaders before heading out on a five-day guided tour on the Nahanni River.

The NDP is calling on the government to complete consultation with Northerners to consider expansion of the Nahanni National Park Reserve. The party takes the position that all development should be halted until the impacts can be measured on the fragile river system. Layton echoed the concerns of Dehcho leaders – that the Conservative government is fast-tracking projects for big oil, gas and mining companies without protecting their lands and animals, or considering the major impacts of climate change.

"The Nahanni River, with its majestic canyons, natural hot springs and unique ecosystem, is in danger. We cannot afford to damage this natural wonder. I hope my trip can be a call to action," said Layton.



Jack speaks with Native Communications Society Executive Director Dane Gibson, left, and Deh Cho on-air announcer Jerry Antoine about Northern Aboriginal issues. Jack and Olivia also toured the NCS studio.

The NDP made significant gains in the January 2006 election. Two and a half million voters sent us to Ottawa to fight for working families, and that's exactly what we did. We had a very strong spring session as The opposition in Parliament, fighting for our *Working Families First Agenda*. Our goal is to protect and strengthen our public health care system; provide working families with economic security; protect our environment in the wake of significant effects of global warming; and deliver opportunities and equality for Aboriginals.

At the end of the voyage, Layton, Chow and Bevington made a brief stop in Nahanni Butte, then attended the final day of the Dene National Assembly on the Hay River Reserve.

In September, the Western Arctic sent seven delegates to the NDP's 22nd Convention in Quebec City. Attended by 2,000 delegates, observers and special guests, it was the second largest convention in NDP history. This year, an NDP Aboriginal Commission was formed by First Nations, Métis and Inuit delegates from across the country. Eileen Marlowe of Yellowknife participated in this party initiative.



Dennis mingles with Ulukhaktok residents at the Billy Joss golf tournament in July.



Dennis addresses delegates at the Gwich'in assembly in Aklavik on Aug. 16.

Bevington on the move

June 29 – Kakisa: Attended the Dehcho Assembly. It was great to see the Assembly come together to endorse the Dehcho land use plan. As well, congratulations to Grand Chief Herb Norwegian on his re-election.

June 30th – Hay River: Attended the Diamond Jenness high school graduation.

July 4 – Colville Lake: This was my first time here as MP. Met with Chief Richard Kochon and toured through the community. I met many elders and trappers and looked at the state of housing. In the evening, I attended a public meeting to hear about a wide range of issues affecting residents, including the cost of living and pension clawbacks.

July 5-6 – Fort Good Hope: Had the opportunity to meet with many of the people in the community over the two days, including the leadership. Many concerns were raised about the proposed Mackenzie Gas Pipeline and its impact on the community and the region. Locations of barge sites and work camps were being questioned, and there was a sense that the community was losing out on the deal. In conjunction with the community government, there was a feast and public meeting held with about 100 people in attendance. Many issues were raised, including the question of pensions and the cost of living.

July 6 – Yellowknife: Attended the Western Arctic NDP Annual General Meeting. Many important resolutions were passed and then brought forward in September at the national convention.

July 13 – Ulukhaktok/Holman: Travelled to the community and had

meetings with community leaders, elders and residents. As well, I participated in the first day of the Billy Joss Open Golf Tournament as a special guest. This was a tremendous experience and a wonderful event in a beautiful part of our riding that not many people get to visit.

July 16 – Yellowknife: Attended the Folk on the Rocks music festival.

July 17-19 – Edmonton: In my role as NDP Energy Critic, I attended a Western Canada/Western States Energy conference, where the energy industry was discussed extensively.

July 21-30 – Yellowknife, Fort Simpson, Nahanni Butte: Participated in NDP Leader Jack Layton's tour of the NWT (see details on previous page).

July 30 – Hay River Reserve: Attended the Dene National Assembly with Jack Layton and Olivia Chow.

August 2-3 – Wekweeti: Attended the Tlicho Assembly and heard issues raised, including the need for a more effective federal government policy on self-government implementation for the Tlicho.

August 14-15 – Tuktoyaktuk: Attended the Arctic Coastal Zone confer-

ence on climate change, which was hosted by the community. This event was very well-attended.

August 16 – Aklavik: Attended the Gwich'in Assembly. The assembly demonstrated good financial management since its claims agreement by approving a very large Heritage Fund, which had been built up over the years.

August 17 – Yellowknife: Invited to a reception to greet Prime Minister Stephen Harper on his visit to the NWT. Appeared before a Legislative Assembly Committee to discuss the high cost of living, and discuss efforts to increase the Northern Living Allowance.

August 18-20 – Fort Smith: Attended the South Slave Friendship Festival.

August 23 – Fort Good Hope: Attended the funeral for four residents who perished in a plane crash.

August 24 – Fort Resolution: Attended the Akaitcho Assembly.

August 28-31 – Dehcho Tour: Along with MLA Kevin Menicoche, I traveled to Fort Simpson, Jean Marie River, Wrigley, and Fort Liard. We held joint public meetings in all communities and met many people.



Nahendeh MLA Kevin Menicoche, left, and Dennis met with community leaders in Wrigley and stopped at Chief Julien Yendo school on Aug. 29.



About 100 Northerners marched along Franklin Avenue in Yellowknife on Oct. 5, protesting their disgust over the \$1 billion program cuts.

Conservative cuts show their true colors

Stephen Harper's latest program cuts show whose side he's really on. Once again, everyday families and disadvantaged Canadians take the hit.

On Sept. 26, the Conservatives cut \$1 billion to programs we rely on, with \$1 billion more to come. On that same day, the Finance Department announced a \$13.7 billion federal surplus.

These cuts were unnecessary, and Mr. Harper has the arrogance to call this an exercise in "trimming the fat."

By cutting \$55 million from youth employment programs, the Conservatives are making it harder for young

people to enter the workforce. Are Canada's youth now *fat to be trimmed*?

Cuts to adult literacy and workplace skills programs will eliminate opportunities for Canadians to improve their skills for better jobs. Are adult learners now *fat to be trimmed*?

As a result of these cuts, more Aboriginal Canadians will die from smoking-related diseases. Some women's organizations won't get the funding they need, the NWT tourism industry will suffer a huge blow, and on it goes as the effects of 75 funding cuts settle in.

Meanwhile, did these Conservatives cut one cent from multi-billion-dollar subsidies to Big Oil? Or remove one tax break from their corporate friends? No – and just like the Liberals, the Conservatives show whose side they're on through the choices they make.

Canada shows neglect for Aboriginal rights at UN

Canada's Conservative government stunned human rights observers this June by voting to reject the draft Declaration on Indigenous Peoples' Rights at the new UN Human Rights Council.

The Council passed the Declaration anyway – by a 30-2 vote – but many Canadians are asking why their government would oppose progress on human rights.

Dozens of Canadian Aboriginal or-

ganizations contributed to this document. And it was a Canadian, John Peters Humphrey, who drafted the broader UN Declaration of Human Rights. Building on that history, Canada had an opportunity to show the world it still has relevance in international affairs.

Instead, Stephen Harper is quickly cementing a reputation for blocking progressive action. First he retreated from Kyoto, the world's only climate change treaty. Now his government opposes a basic international endorsement of Aboriginal peoples' rights.

Here at home, of course, this government is still trying to scuttle the Kelowna Agreement signed last November to begin improving the lives of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people.

These Conservatives have never stood up for Aboriginal people. And each passing week, this government confirms that it's not on the side of working families whose values include justice and fairness.



Feedback

I want to hear from you. If you have any questions, comments or concerns you would like to share, please send them along to me in Ottawa. Letters to your MP's Parliament Hill office do not require a postage stamp.

Visit my new website at www.dennisbevington.ca