

## **Dennis' Speech to Protestors – October 12, 2006**

I want to thank you all for coming out again today. We all gathered here last week with a common goal -- to fight back against these senseless, mean-spirited cuts to social, cultural, health, justice and economic programs which are desperately needed here in the Northwest Territories.

Today, Rona Ambrose, the Conservative Government's Environment Minister, is at the Explorer Hotel meeting with other federal, provincial and territorial ministers from across the country. We need to show this government that we will not sit back and let them take away the services, programs and support that we desperately need to improve our quality of life. This Conservative government is not standing up for us. There was no attempt to consult our territorial and provincial governments, or any of the affected groups before shocking us with these \$1 billion cutbacks. Now they are planning additional cuts of \$1 billion to more unidentified programs. And again, there have been no attempts to consult anyone on where those cuts should come from.

*We have to send a collective message – loud and clear -- that we are strongly opposed to these actions. Stephen Harper's government defended these cuts as "trimming the fat," claiming programs such as adult literacy training, volunteer initiatives, minority rights, equality for women, incentives to boost tourism and economic development, and cultural and health promotional initiatives are not "value for money."*

*We say working Canadians who rely on these programs are not "fat to be trimmed." At a time when the government has a \$13 billion surplus, it is appalling to see massive cuts to programs that we and other Canadians rely on.*

*As a result, smoking rates and cancer statistics among aboriginal Canadians will continue to rise, fewer adults will have opportunities to improve their literacy skills, fewer youths will find work, the fight for women's equality will take a giant leap back in time, and our businesses and economy will suffer when we lose tourists to other countries.*

*We call on the Conservative government to recognize that these programs are important to us, and demand an immediate reinstatement of these funds. We also urge them to consult Northerners and other Canadians to determine where the next cuts should come from. Perhaps they should stop subsidizing big oil and gas companies, and decrease military spending instead of increasing it. That's what I call "VALUE FOR MONEY."*

*Last week, we circulated a petition asking Prime Minister Harper to reverse the \$1 billion cutbacks. I am hoping each and every one of you have signed it. If not, you can still stop by my Constituency Office on 49<sup>th</sup> Street before October 17. I will then table this petition in the House of Commons, and together with the NDP Caucus, I will fight for a reversal of these cuts, and consultation on where these next cuts should come from.*

*Thank you! Merci! Mahsi Cho!*