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CONSERVATIVE CUTS TO SUMMER JOBS PROGRAM CRUEL, SAYS NDP

OTTAWA - NDP MPs condemned the Harper government today for cutting crucial summer employment funding to non-profit organizations, community groups and small local businesses across the country. Organizations began receiving notice yesterday of their ineligibility for funds to hire summer students through the new Canada Summer Jobs Program established by the Conservatives.

"Instead of removing politics from Canada Summer Jobs, they removed the summer jobs," said NDP Post-secondary Education Critic Denise Savoie (Victoria).

According to the Glace Bay and Area Business and Professional Association, Cape Breton alone lost 900 out of 1,000 jobs, including 100% cuts for the Miners' Museum, the Glace Bay Heritage Museum, and a little league baseball program for disabled children. Eighty organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador were rejected, including museums, parks, recreation programs and Women in Science and Engineering, which lost 30 spots for young female researchers.

"These community organizations and small businesses are the backbone of our communities. They have a long track record of providing excellent opportunities for career development for students and important services and programs for our communities. Everybody loses with these cuts - our students, our families, our communities, and our economy," said Peter Stoffer (Sackville - Eastern Shore).

NDP MPs across Canada are starting to hear of similar rejected applications from previously funded and worthy programs.

"These rejection notices are just the tip of the iceberg - we will only know over the next weeks just how many jobs have been lost," said NDP Youth critic Olivia Chow (Trinity - Spadina).

Last September, the federal NDP caucus - led by Savoie, Chow, and NDP Human Resources critic Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie) - first raised the flag that the Conservative cuts would negatively impact the most vulnerable youth and communities, and the small local employers that provide the overwhelming majority of student jobs through the program.

"What is happening with these rejected groups is exactly the opposite of what all parties including the Tories recommended in the last Parliament," said Martin. "We said we wanted more funding, not less, going to economically disadvantaged areas and needy students. If we do not get our students home and in good jobs for the summer, that increases the likelihood of them never returning to work in our communities."

The NDP is calling on the Conservative government to revamp their program and provide increased funding targeted to communities in need across Canada.

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