

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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HARPER A HYPOCRITE ON ARCTIC SOVEREIGNTY: NDP *Conservatives didn't do simplest thing to protect North, NDP uncovers*

OTTAWA – The NDP has discovered that despite an election promise to force foreign ships to get consent before entering Canada's Arctic waters, two years later the Arctic ship registry system (NORDREG) remains voluntary.

"It only takes a Cabinet decision to make this change," said NDP Arctic Sovereignty Critic Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic). "The minister responsible, Loyola Hearn, should have brought this to Cabinet months ago. This lack of action shows that the Conservatives' grand words about the North are just political posturing."

During the last election, in Winnipeg on December 22, 2005, Stephen Harper said, "Under a new Conservative government, Canada will know when foreign ships – whether they be Russian, British, Danish, American, or anybody else's are in our waters. It is the responsibility of the Canadian military to monitor and patrol our land and waters, and under a Conservative government, this will be done. We simply need to know when the ships of the United States, Russia or any other country are in Canadian waters, and we will require them to ask our consent to traverse our waters."

"It's clear that under a Conservative government, Canadians will never know who is in our Arctic waters," said Bevington. "It's mandatory to register before entering our waters off the East and West Coasts, why not the Arctic? The Harper government is certainly not one to get things done, especially not when it comes to the North."

NORDREG is a voluntary ship registry system operated by the Canadian Coast Guard covering the waters of James Bay, Hudson's Bay and the waters surrounding the Arctic Islands. According to the NORDREG website, its objectives are to:

1. enhance the safe and efficient movement of maritime transportation in Arctic waters by establishing an interface between the Canadian Coast Guard and maritime transportation;
2. prevent pollution of Arctic waters by establishing a method of screening vessels in Arctic waters to ensure their compliance with regulations made pursuant to the Arctic Waters Pollution Act and Part XV of the Canada Shipping Act; and
3. strengthen Canadian sovereignty in Arctic waters.

"How can this system accomplish these goals when it's not mandatory?" asked Bevington.

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