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CONSERVATIVES EVADE NORTHERN ISSUES WITH DECEPTIVE TACTICS

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YELLOWKNIFE – Indian and Northern Affairs Minister Chuck Strahl is the latest Conservative Cabinet Minister to openly attack MP Dennis Bevington's Parliamentary vote track record in order to avoid the real issues that matter to Northerners.

In a letter to the Slave River Journal last week, Strahl continued a Conservative tactic of distraction. Rather than dealing with an outstanding issue on the Normal Wells oilfields raised by Bevington in a press release, Strahl diverted to a few specific items within the last two federal budgets.

The minister gave the impression that Bevington had opposed these specific items in the House of Commons, when in fact he had been working diligently to get them on Parliament's agenda. Federal budgets are voted on as a whole, taking into account the broader issues of taxation and expenditures of the entire country. Bevington voted against the 2008 budget because of reckless corporate tax cuts which are now putting Canada in a deficit position.

“(Strahl) is being condescending to Northerners if he thinks that we don't understand the role of an opposition MP in our political system. He is misleading us by suggesting a budget vote is ever held on one or two line items,” said Bevington.

In August of 2007, Prime Minister Stephen Harper echoed Strahl's criticism of the Western Arctic MP during an impromptu visit to Yellowknife, at the centre of Bevington's riding. Just two months prior to that, two other Conservatives, the Honourable Diane Ablonczy and Fort McMurray-Athabasca MP Brian Jean, had criticized Bevington in the House of Commons for voting against “tax relief measures” in the Conservative federal budget.

“They are all reading from the same script,” said Bevington. “Just like on most issues, Conservative MPs follow the instructions of the PMO. This is the operating procedure of the Harper government.

“Rather than dealing with issues important to Northerners -- such as windfall royalties from the resource-rich Norman Wells oilfields -- they attempt these diversion tactics which are truly petty and meaningless,” concluded Bevington.



Communiqué

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