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HARPER'S PLAN FOR THE NORTH A THREAT TO LAND CLAIMS

YELLOWKNIFE – Stephen Harper's plan to eliminate local land, water and environmental boards is an attack on the very foundation of land claim settlements, said NDP Incumbent MP Dennis Bevington.

“Stephen Harper wants to implement the recommendations of the McCrank report as quickly as possible,” said Bevington. “This is nothing more than a direct attack on community input into the decision making process for development.”

In May of this year, former Alberta Energy and Utilities Board chair Neil McCrank proposed, in his report “The Road to Improvement,” either completely eliminating local boards or turning them into administrative offices. In Iqaluit on Saturday September 20th, Stephen Harper said he would change the regulatory process for Northern natural resource projects, as recommended by The Road to Improvement.

“The Dene, Metis and Inuvialuit have fought long and hard to gain the right to have community input into decisions on development projects,” said Bevington. “Harper keeps referring to the Diefenbaker days as the inspiration for his vision of the North. I don't think any Northerners want to go back to those days when Inuit were forced to wear numbered ID disks, construction and operation of the DEW Line created massive environmental damage, residential and day schools were expanded and the government of the Northwest Territories consisted of a committee of senior bureaucrats.”

“The New Democrat plan will build the North by respecting the land claims, not dismantling them,” said Bevington. “Shortly, New Democrats will be putting out our plan for the North.”

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For More Information Contact:

Mark Heyck, Re-elect Dennis Bevington Campaign, 867-873-8683