

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**BEVINGTON CONDEMNS HEALTH MINISTER AGLUKKAQ
FOR ENDING FUNDING TO FIRST NATIONS DENTAL THERAPY SCHOOL**

OTTAWA – Western Arctic MP Dennis Bevington today condemned federal health minister Leona Aglukkaq for ending funding to the First Nations University of Canada's National School of Dental Therapy. "Considering the high level of dental problems faced by Aboriginal people it is unconscionable that in order to save a few dollars the Health Minister has killed the only school in Canada which produced Aboriginal dental therapists," said Bevington.

Based in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, the First Nations University of Canada's National School of Dental Therapy trains dental therapists to assist communities assess oral health needs, plan dental clinics, provide dental health education and operate dental therapy programs. The program was started in Fort Smith, NWT and was transferred to Saskatchewan in the 1980s. The school is the only dental therapy school in Canada and trained Northerners and Aboriginal people from across Canada

In a letter to Bevington, Health Minister Aglukkaq said funding the school was outside the mandate of Health Canada.

"Minister Aglukkaq just doesn't get it when she says Aboriginal health is not part of the mandate of Health Canada," said Bevington. "Even the right-wing government of Saskatchewan is perplexed. In the Saskatchewan Legislature the Advanced Education Minister Rob Norris said the rationale used by the Health Canada was empirically inaccurate."

"It just seems to me to be another case of the Conservatives being 'penny wise and pound foolish,'" said Bevington. "I just can't understand this Conservative Health Minister she would rather pay the costs of poor oral health than spend a small amount of money on training dental therapists."

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