



# PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

*United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*

## THE BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS URGES STEPHEN HARPER TO CORRECT HIS MISTAKES BY EXTENDING A HAND TO THE ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES

Ottawa, Wednesday, 23 May 2007 – “Canada has been given one last chance to send the Aboriginal peoples a clear message that it considers them full citizens and that it respects their culture and traditions and their right to guide the development of their identity. That is why Canada must alter its stance and join the ranks of countries that have signed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which will be submitted to a final vote in the next few weeks,” said **Marc Lemay**, the Bloc Québécois Critic for Indian and Northern Affairs.

The MP for Abitibi–Témiscamingue and his colleague **Yvon Lévesque**, the Deputy Critic for Indian and Northern Affairs, thus expressed the Bloc’s complete support for the efforts of the representatives of the First Nations of Quebec who are currently trying to convince Prime Minister Stephen Harper to change the position he took last year. The Chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador, Ghislain Picard, will launch a new appeal this afternoon at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, currently taking place in New York.

“For more than twenty years, the United Nations has been trying to establish a consensus in order to provide justice for indigenous peoples, and the coming weeks will be crucial to making this Declaration a reality. Canada indicated its agreement in 2005, but we have to assume that the Prime Minister’s servile relationship with his American and Australian counterparts once again won out over common sense, since Stephen Harper went back on that agreement. Fortunately, it is not too late to correct this affront to our Aboriginal fellow citizens of Quebec, Canada and the whole world,” **Mr. Levesque** added.

“The United States, Australia and New Zealand are sending the world a very sad message. By refusing to support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, they are telling the rest of the planet that they consider their indigenous peoples second-class citizens. The Bloc Québécois feels that it is this government’s duty to show leadership by serving notice that the marginalization of Indigenous peoples has gone on long enough. Stephen Harper must support the Declaration and he must do so publicly now, **Mr. Lemay** concluded.

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