



# PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

*Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*

## “THE GOVERNMENT’S REFUSAL TO RATIFY THE DECLARATION PUTS CANADA TO SHAME”

– Marc Lemay

Ottawa, Thursday, May 1, 2008 – Because Canada has still not ratified the significant Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, over 100 legal and other experts today denounced, in an open letter, the Conservative government's failure to act. The letter points out that the legal arguments the Conservatives have put forward to justify their refusal do not hold water. “This action rightly reminds the Harper government that its refusal to ratify the Declaration is ignorant and utterly in the wrong,” said the Bloc Québécois Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Critic and MP for Abitibi–Témiscamingue, **Marc Lemay**. “Only four countries have taken this route, and the fact that Canada is one of them is truly shameful, especially as it has let slip many opportunities to open a constructive dialogue with Aboriginal peoples.”

“It is becoming more and more obvious that at heart the Conservatives care very little for human rights,” said the Bloc’s Deputy Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Critic and MP for Abitibi–Baie James–Nunavik–Eeyou, **Yvon Lévesque**. “To their refusal to ratify the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples we can add their elimination of the Court Challenges Program, which was the preferred tool of minorities seeking to enforce their rights, as well as their drastic funding cuts to Status of Women Canada and Aboriginal literacy programs. Their record isn't getting any better, and I can't say I find it reassuring.”

**Marc Lemay** deplored the fact that despite reiterated support both from the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and from the House of Commons, Stephen Harper has not only categorically refused to endorse the Declaration but has gone so far as to try to influence other countries to follow his sorry example. “The United Nations worked patiently and meticulously with indigenous peoples for over 20 years to produce this instrument for defending their rights,” said the MP for Abitibi–Témiscamingue, “and Stephen Harper shrugs off all this work by citing loopholes so lacking in credibility that they are an insult to our intelligence. But his arrogance fails to conceal the truly regrettable spinelessness that goes with it.”

– 30 –

Information:

Karyne Duplessis Piché, Media Relations Officer  
Office of the Leader of the Bloc Québécois

Tel.: 613-947-2495

Cell: 613-296-1041

[www.blocquebecois.org](http://www.blocquebecois.org)