



COMMUNIQUÉ

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Draft UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

“HARPER GOVERNMENT DISCREDITS CANADA AND QUEBEC BY VOTING AGAINST THE DRAFT DECLARATION”

- Marc Lemay

Ottawa, Thursday, June 29, 2006 – “The Harper government has not only again scorned the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and the interests of Quebeckers and Canadians but also seriously discredited Canada by opposing the Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,” said the Bloc Québécois critic for Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Member for Abitibi–Témiscamingue, **Marc Lemay**.

“The Harper government has rejected the recommendations of Amnesty International, the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador, the Assembly of First Nations, Quebec Native Women, the Native Women’s Association of Canada, Kairos, the Civil Liberties Union, Rights and Democracy, the National Organization of Inuit and the Grand Council of the Crees, as well as France and Great Britain, which voted along with many other countries in favour of the draft declaration. Of the 47 member countries of the Human Rights Council, only two countries voted against the declaration: one was Canada. The Conservative government’s determination to align itself with the policies of the George W. Bush administration continues to isolate Canada on the international stage,” said **Marc Lemay**.

Mr. Lemay pointed out that Quebec is a frontrunner in recognizing Aboriginal rights. In 1985, the René Lévesque government recognized 11 nations in Quebec. Today these nations are vibrant and their populations are growing. More recently, in 2002, the Bernard Landry government signed a progressive and internationally recognized agreement, the *Paix des Braves*, with the Crees of Quebec.

“As with the sovereignty movement, Quebeckers recognized on several occasions the rights of Aboriginals to self-determination and self-government. To this end, the Bloc Québécois presented a motion calling on the government to support the Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The motion was agreed to by the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, but the Harper government chose to ignore it,” said **Marc Lemay**.

“Without having any reasonable grounds, the Canadian government refused to support the adoption of a critical agreement to recognize and protect the rights of indigenous peoples. The United Nations and indigenous groups worldwide have been working on this proposal for more than 20 years. It is an irresponsible attitude and beneath the spirit of respect and co-operation that Quebeckers and Canadians have for their fellow Aboriginal Peoples,” said **Marc Lemay**.

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