



# PRESS RELEASE

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*No federal funding for First Nations Pavilion in Val-d'Or*

## **“HARPER GOVERNMENT SHOWS ITS INDIFFERENCE TO ISSUES AFFECTING ABORIGINALS YET AGAIN”**

- Yvon Lévesque

Ottawa, Friday, June 23, 2006 – “Today, the Conservative government has again demonstrated to Aboriginals that their education is not a priority. After voting against a motion on the Kelowna Accord earlier this week, the federal government has now turned its indifference on Aboriginals in Quebec,” said the Member for Abitibi–Baie-James–Nunavik–Eeyou, **Yvon Lévesque**. Mr. Lévesque was reacting to the decision of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Jim Prentice, who reiterated his department’s position to refuse funding for the First Nations Pavilion in Val-d’Or in Abitibi-Témiscamingue.

The establishment of the First Nations Pavilion would fulfill the mission of the *Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue* respecting First Nations. More than 200 Aboriginal students enrolled in the university again this year, but it lacks sufficient space. The Pavilion would enable the university to accommodate Aboriginal students from across Quebec, a first for the province.

“The only other Aboriginal university is in Regina, and its pavilion was built in 1998 with the help of \$10 million in funding from the departments of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Western Economic Diversification Canada. Yet the federal funding needed to build the Pavilion in Val-d’Or is the same amount that Quebec has already pledged to provide, namely \$3.8 million, a fraction of the cost of the Pavilion in Regina,” said **Yvon Lévesque**.

“I have made substantial efforts in this area. I was even able to obtain confirmation from the Senior Assistant Deputy Minister of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development that it was technically possible for a minister to use his discretionary powers to make the same gesture that was made in 1998,” said **Yvon Lévesque**.

“This refusal to address Aboriginal issues is further proof of the federal Conservatives’ indifference to First Nations. It follows on the heels of its refusal to support the Kelowna Accord and its withdrawal from the Draft UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It is clear to me that the Conservative government has no desire to help Aboriginals,” said the Bloc Québécois Critic for Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Member for Abitibi-Témiscamingue, **Marc Lemay**.

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