



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE #05-336

## **NORTHERN PREMIERS SEEK FEDERAL LEADERS' VIEWS ON KEY ISSUES**

**December 21, 2005** – Premiers of Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut have written to the four federal leaders seeking their views on key issues of importance for Northerners.

Premiers Dennis Fentie (Yukon), Joseph Handley (NWT) and Paul Okalik (Nunavut) have outlined four key issues:

- Adequacy of funding for programs in the North
- Strategy for northern development
- Devolution and land claims
- Outcomes of the recent First Ministers' Meeting on Aboriginal issues

Premiers said they believe these issues are important to the North and felt that Northerners should know each of the leaders' views. These are also issues that are not just significant for the people of the three territories, but have significant implications for all Canadians, they said. All of the responses received will be made public.

A copy of the letter is attached.

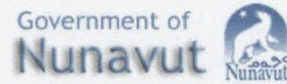
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December 14, 2005

The Right Honourable Paul Martin, P.C.  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada  
81 Metcalfe Street, Suite 400  
OTTAWA, Ontario K1P 6M8

The Honourable Stephen Harper, P.C.  
Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada  
1720-130 Albert Street  
OTTAWA, Ontario K1P 5G4

The Honourable Jack Layton, P.C.  
Leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada  
300 – 279 Laurier West  
OTTAWA, Ontario K1P 5J9

Mr. Gilles Duceppe  
Leader of the Bloc Québécois  
3750 Crémazie Est, Bureau 307  
MONTRÉAL, QC H2A 1B6

Dear Sirs:

As Northern Premiers, we have been working hard on a number of issues we believe are not just of great importance to the people of Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut but will have significant implications for all Canadians as we work towards building a stronger Canadian Federation.

In that regard, we ask that as national party leaders you use the opportunity of the current federal election campaign to make clear to Northerners, and all Canadians, your views on the following matters:

**1) Adequacy of funding for programs in the North:** As you know the federal government has, as recently as the November First Ministers' Meeting on Aboriginal issues, recognized the unique circumstances in the North in terms of the higher cost of providing services to our residents. The need to provide a base amount plus per capita to territories is well understood and supported by all jurisdictions. The Council of the Federation, which includes all of Canada's premiers, has also taken the position that the current interim Territorial Formula

Financing arrangements no longer takes into account the difference between the expenditure needs and the revenue means of the territorial governments.

Recent failed attempts to come to an agreement on funding of the Early Learning and Child Care initiative in the North is a good example of how Northerners may be left out of a program because of Canada's insistence on a per-capita approach to funding that will not meet the unique costs and circumstances we face in meeting the developmental needs of a young and vulnerable population.

**2) Strategy for northern development:** Much work has been done in the North to advance our common goal of developing a comprehensive strategy for building capacity, building healthier communities and building the Northern economy so that we can fulfill our tremendous potential. We believe it is essential to the people of the North that the territories and Canada move ahead with a common vision for the North and look forward to discussing how you and your parties might proceed with the development of this vision.

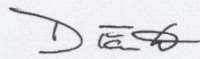
**3) Devolution and land claims:** As you know, the three territories are at different stages of development in terms of devolution of responsibilities, completion of land claims and implementation of self-government agreements. We have been supportive of each others' efforts in all of these areas including the completion of an Agreement in Principle on Devolution and Resource Revenue Sharing for the NWT, the commencement of Devolution talks with Nunavut by the end of the year, the completion of the three outstanding land claims and the appropriate implementation of final and self-government agreements in the Yukon.

**4) Outcomes of the recent First Ministers' Meeting on Aboriginal issues:** Significant progress was made at this meeting and we would like to know whether you intend to follow through on commitments made in Kelowna, including Canada's important recognition and acknowledgement that there are unique circumstances in the North and that measures be taken to ensure that the territories can benefit from any programs or initiatives developed as a result of the great work done at the FMM.

These issues are as complex as they are important to the North. We look forward to your reply and, in the interest of providing northern voters with as much information as possible, we are pleased to make public your responses.

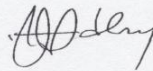
With respect, we await your earliest reply.

Sincerely,



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Hon. Dennis Fentie  
Premier  
Yukon



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Hon. Joe Handley  
Premier  
Northwest Territories



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Hon. Paul Okalik  
Premier  
Nunavut