

SPEAKING NOTES

The Honourable Chuck Strahl, PC, MP Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-status Indians

at the Signing of the Nunavut Devolution Negotiation Protocol

**Ottawa, Ontario
September 5, 2008**

Check against delivery

Good morning, Premier Okalik, Mr. Kaludjak, ladies and gentlemen. I'm thrilled to join you today to celebrate a truly important milestone in the history of Nunavut. A few minutes from now, Premier Okalik, Mr. Kaludjak and I will sign the Nunavut Devolution Negotiation Protocol. It's a complicated name for what is really a fairly straightforward and positive document.

The Protocol is a consensus between the Government of Canada, the Government of Nunavut and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated. It establishes a clear process for us to follow when negotiating the transfer of responsibilities over lands and resources from the federal government to the territory.

The results of the negotiations are sure to be profound. When they are finished, we will have an agreement that places decision-making authority in the hands of the people of Nunavut. This will enable them to make the decisions that will shape the years ahead.

With that authority comes much greater influence over the destiny of their lives, their families, their communities, and their land.

This protocol also demonstrates that the Prime Minister and our government means it when we say we want Northerners to have more decision-making power over their territory. And that we are serious about pursuing and achieving the four core objectives of our government's Northern Strategy: strengthening our Arctic sovereignty, protecting the North's unique environment, promoting social and economic development throughout the North, and improving and developing northern governance.

In fact, this Conservative Government has put Canada's North higher on Canada's political and economic agenda than it has been for decades—higher than it has been since the government of Prime Minister John Diefenbaker half a century ago. This achievement didn't just happen by accident. Both the Prime Minister and I have made a point of being in the North regularly, to listen to Northerners and ensure their needs are priorities for the Government of Canada. Indeed, the Prime Minister just completed a visit to the North during which he heard from a variety of Northerners on the issues that are foremost in their minds—generating greater economic and social development, safeguarding the environment and asserting our sovereignty over our Arctic lands and waters.

In keeping with this Northern Strategy yesterday I was pleased to announce, along with Minister Lavinia Brown of the Government of Nunavut, over \$24 million in joint funding to support community and economic development projects in Nunavut. These investments will help communities build infrastructure that supports clean water, energy efficiency, tourism, culture and recreational opportunities – all essential to a better quality of life for Nunavummiut.

The protocol will be an important guide for us all to continue to share our views and ideas as we work together toward devolution.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Paul Mayer who has served as Ministerial Representative for Nunavut devolution, and also Tony Penikett, the Chief Negotiator for the Government of Nunavut, and Charlie Evalik, the Chief Negotiator for Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated, for their unwavering commitment and diligent efforts in reaching the Protocol. Simply put, there would be no celebration, no signing ceremony without their help and dedication.

I also want to take a moment to pay tribute to the Nunavummiut, the people of Nunavut. They have taken great strides to ensure that their Territory is more than just a word. More than a place to live.

Nunavut is truly a way of life.

I have a clear message for all of them:

I salute you for your efforts. And I want to assure you that the Prime Minister and our government will continue to work in partnership with you towards this goal of Nunavut devolution.

Thank you very much.

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