

# Patterson's silence attacked

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NEWS/NORTH

The Keewatin Inuit Association accuses government leader Dennis Patterson of not speaking up for the people on the proposed Kiggavik uranium mine.

"Which side are you on?" asks a Feb. 16 letter to Patterson sent by the KIA during its recent general assembly in Rankin Inlet. "Perhaps you feel that our opposition (to the mine) has been so strong that a rejection of the proposal is a foregone conclusion?"

Rankin Inlet, N.W.T.

"We have heard influential political figures argue that the real decision will be made at the highest levels in Ottawa, not by the FEARO panel."

The letter charges that government silence leads to the conclusion that a backroom deal has already been made.

One of the influential political figures referred to is W. J. Stephen, director general of DIAND's N.W.T. region Northern Affairs Pro-

gram, who predicted in a confidential memo that the mine would go ahead.

But Patterson distanced himself from those comments by writing the KIA that Stephen's opinions were his own. Patterson said no territorial employee who spoke to Stephen took any position on whether the mine would be approved by Ottawa or not.

He further added that the territorial government would wait until after seeing the Federal Environmental Assessment Review Office report before taking a stand.

"The people of the Keewatin have clearly expressed themselves as being against this project," Keewatin Inuit Association president Louis Pilakapsi told *News/North* through an interpreter. "They deserve to have their concerns represented by their government. It's the lack of leadership by the territorial government in representing them that is itself an issue."

Pilakapsi says it was understandable for Patterson to remain silent in the early stages of the debate over the project for fear he

might be seen as imposing his own views. But now relating to the proposed mine are translated and circulated to communities in the region.

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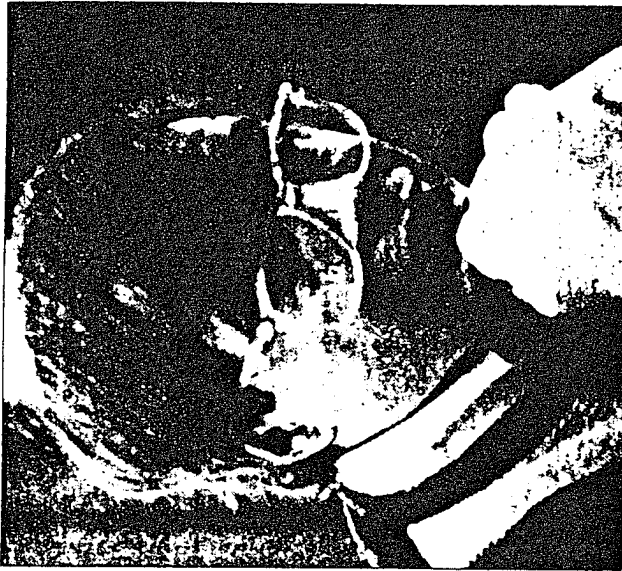
One government has decided to take a position on Kiggavik — at the municipal level. The Hamlet of Baker Lake will hold a plebiscite to give its council direction in expressing local concerns.

The KIA has asked that the FEARO hearings be put off until at least next September until all submis-

sions and documents are translated and circulated to communities in the region. Pilakapsi says Keewatin residents would have had better access to translation of documents if the GNWT had been backing them. One government has decided to take a position on Kiggavik — at the municipal level. The Hamlet of Baker Lake will hold a plebiscite to give its council direction in expressing local concerns.

## Quote

"Which side are you on?" The Keewatin Inuit Association asks government leader Dennis Patterson to take a stand on the proposed Kiggavik uranium mine. Page 9



It's time for Government leader Dennis Patterson to declare his opposition to the proposed Kiggavik uranium mine, says a letter from the Keewatin Inuit Association.