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## **Environment Minister Shirks Duty By Skipping Water Conference: Swann**

Calgary – David Swann, Alberta Liberal Shadow Minister of Environment, says the provincial Conservatives are shirking their duty to the environment by refusing to attend an important water conference in Fort Chipewyan.

“They were invited to participate and they declined,” says Swann. “I am extremely disappointed that the Environment Minister does not have the courage to face the people he works for and address their concerns. Simply, he is abdicating his responsibility.”

Swann, respected for his environmental advocacy both inside and outside the Alberta Legislature, is the only provincial MLA registered for the Keepers of the Water Conference in Fort Chipewyan. He will participate in a panel discussion Friday alongside Territorial government leaders and federal MPs.

“I look forward to meeting with aboriginal leaders, elders and environmental leaders to exchange ideas as well as learn more about the cumulative effects of development,” he says. “I am eager to see the watershed plan that results from this conference.”

“Successive Tory governments have allowed escalating resource extraction in this area without consideration of the full scope of the impacts of this development. Only now is Premier Ed Stelmach beginning to develop a strategy for the Athabasca. It may be too late. The damage has already been done.”

He says one of the conference highlights will be keynote speaker Dr. John O’Connor, who has raised concerns over the health of people living downstream from massive oilsands development.

“Dr. O’Connor’s vocal stand on water quality of the Athabasca River has brought a number of health issues to the forefront,” says Swann.

This is the third Keepers of the Water Conference. The first produced a declaration on the importance of clean water and the second resulted in the drafting of a number of resolutions on protecting water resources.

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