



# STATEMENT ON CANADA'S ARCTIC FOREIGN POLICY

Exercising Sovereignty  
and Promoting Canada's  
NORTHERN STRATEGY  
Abroad



Government  
of Canada

Gouvernement  
du Canada

Canada

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photo: Martin Fortier/ArcticNet

## INTRODUCTION

The Arctic is fundamental to Canada's national identity. It is home to many Canadians, including indigenous peoples, across the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, and the northern parts of many Canadian provinces. The Arctic is embedded in Canadian history and culture, and in the Canadian soul. The Arctic also represents tremendous potential for Canada's future. Exercising sovereignty over Canada's North, as over the rest of Canada, is our number one Arctic foreign policy priority.

Our vision for the Arctic is a stable, rules-based region with clearly defined boundaries, dynamic economic growth and trade, vibrant Northern communities, and healthy and productive ecosystems. This Arctic foreign policy statement articulates how the Government of Canada will promote this vision, using leadership and stewardship. It elaborates on Canadian interests in the Arctic and how Canada is pursuing these.

New opportunities and challenges are emerging across the Arctic and North, in part as a result of climate change and the search for new resources. The geopolitical significance of the region and the implications for Canada have never been greater. As global commerce charts a path to the region, Northern resources development will grow ever more critical to Northern economies, to the peoples of the North and to our country as a whole. The potential of the North is of growing interest to Canada, to other Arctic states and, increasingly, to others far from the region itself.

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While the opportunities are great, there are also important social, economic and environmental challenges. Some of these have important international dimensions. Over time, increased access to the Arctic will bring more traffic and people to the region. While mostly positive, this access may also contribute to an increase in environmental threats, search and rescue incidents, civil emergencies and potential illegal activities. How the region as a whole evolves will have major implications for Canada and our role as an Arctic power.

The Government of Canada has launched an ambitious Northern Strategy to respond to these opportunities and challenges. Our Northern Strategy lays out four areas where Canada is taking action to advance its interests both domestically and internationally and to help unlock the North's true potential: exercising sovereignty; promoting economic and social development; protecting our environmental heritage; and improving and devolving Northern governance. In pursuing each of these pillars in our Arctic foreign policy, Canada is committed to exercising the full extent of its sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the region.

“ The geopolitical importance of the Arctic and Canada's interests in it have never been greater. This is why our government has launched an ambitious Northern Agenda based on the timeless responsibility imposed by our national anthem, to keep the True North strong and free. ”

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, August 28, 2008, Inuvik, Northwest Territories

Given our extensive Arctic coastline, our Northern energy and natural resource potential, and the 40 percent of our land mass situated in the North, Canada is an Arctic power. We are taking a robust leadership role in shaping the stewardship, sustainable development and environmental protection of this strategic Arctic region, and engaging with others to advance our interests.

As we advance the four pillars of our Northern Strategy, our international efforts will focus on the following areas:

- ▶ engaging with neighbours to seek to resolve boundary issues;
- ▶ securing international recognition for the full extent of our extended continental shelf;
- ▶ addressing Arctic governance and related emerging issues, such as public safety;
- ▶ creating the appropriate international conditions for sustainable development;

- ▶ seeking trade and investment opportunities that benefit Northerners and all Canadians;
- ▶ encouraging a greater understanding of the human dimension of the Arctic;
- ▶ promoting an ecosystem-based management approach with Arctic neighbours and others;
- ▶ contributing to and supporting international efforts to address climate change in the Arctic;
- ▶ enhancing our efforts on other pressing environmental issues;
- ▶ strengthening Arctic science and the legacy of International Polar Year;
- ▶ engaging Northerners on Canada's Arctic foreign policy;
- ▶ supporting Indigenous Permanent Participant organizations; and
- ▶ providing Canadian youth with opportunities to participate in the circumpolar dialogue.

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## EXERCISING SOVEREIGNTY

In our Arctic foreign policy, the first and most important pillar towards recognizing the potential of Canada's Arctic is the exercise of our sovereignty over the Far North. Canada has a rich history in the North, and Canada's sovereignty is the foundation for realizing the full potential of Canada's North, including its human dimension. This foundation is solid: Canada's Arctic sovereignty is long-standing, well established and based on historic title, founded in part on the presence of Inuit and other indigenous peoples since time immemorial.

“ In exercising our sovereignty...we are not only fulfilling our duty to the people who called this northern frontier home, and to the generations that will follow; we are also being faithful to all who came before us...”

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, August 28, 2008, Inuvik, Northwest Territories

Canada exercises its sovereignty daily through good governance and responsible stewardship. It does so through the broad range of actions it undertakes as a government—whether related to social and economic development, Arctic science and research, environmental protection, the operations of the Canadian Forces or the activities of the Canadian Coast Guard and Royal Canadian Mounted Police. We exercise our sovereignty in the Arctic through our laws and regulations, as we do throughout Canada.

We are putting the full resources of the Government of Canada behind the exercise of our sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction in the Arctic. We are taking a whole-of-government approach. Since taking office, the Prime Minister and many federal cabinet ministers have made regular visits to Canada's North. Further evidence of the priority the Government of Canada is placing on the North was the meeting of G-7 finance ministers in Nunavut in February 2010.

Since 2007, the Government of Canada has announced a number of initiatives to enhance our capacity in the North and to exercise, responsibly, our sovereignty there. These include significant new commitments to allow Canada to better monitor, protect and patrol its Arctic land, sea and sky and to keep pace with changes in the region.

Within the next decade, Canada will launch a new polar icebreaker. This will be the largest and most powerful icebreaker ever in the Canadian Coast Guard fleet.

The *Canada First* Defence Strategy will give the Canadian Forces the tools it needs to provide an increased presence in the Arctic. Through this strategy, Canada is investing in new patrol ships that will be capable of sustained operation in first-year ice to ensure we can closely monitor our waters as they gradually open up and maritime activity increases. In order to support these and other Government of Canada vessels operating in the North, Canada is investing in a berthing and refuelling facility in Nanisivik.

Canada is also expanding the size and capabilities of the Canadian Rangers, drawn primarily from indigenous communities, that provide a military presence and Canada's "eyes and ears" in remote parts of Canada. A new Canadian Forces Arctic Training Centre is also being established in Resolute Bay.

Canada and the United States work together to better monitor and control Northern airspace through our cooperation in NORAD, the North American Aerospace Defence Command. Canadian Forces will also take advantage of new technologies to enhance surveillance capacity of our territory and its approaches.

Canadian Forces Operation Nanook, an annual sovereignty operation that takes place in Canada's Arctic, shows the government's commitment to protecting and demonstrating control over the air, land and sea within our jurisdiction. In 2010, Operation Nanook will include collaboration with the United States and Denmark in order to increase interoperability and exercise a collective response to emerging cross-border challenges.

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This increased Canadian capacity demonstrates Canada's presence in the region and will also ensure that we are better prepared to respond to unforeseen events.

Moving forward, our international agenda will complement these efforts further. Three priority areas that Canada will pursue in the Arctic are: seeking to resolve boundary issues; securing international recognition for the full extent of our extended continental shelf wherein we can exercise our sovereign rights over the resources of the seabed and subsoil; and addressing Arctic governance and related emerging issues, such as public safety.

**On the first priority,** Canada will seek to resolve boundary issues in the Arctic region, in accordance with international law. Our sovereignty over Canadian Arctic lands, including islands, is undisputed—with the single exception of Hans Island, a 1.3-square-kilometre Canadian island which Denmark claims.

With regard to Arctic waters, Canada controls all maritime navigation in its waters. Nevertheless, disagreements exist between the United States and Canada regarding the maritime boundary in the Beaufort Sea (approximately 6,250 square nautical miles) and between Canada and Denmark over a small part of the maritime boundary in the Lincoln Sea. All disagreements are well managed, neither posing defence challenges for Canada nor diminishing Canada's ability to collaborate and cooperate with its Arctic neighbours. Canada will continue to manage these discrete boundary issues and will also, as a priority, seek to work with our neighbours to explore the possibility of resolving them in accordance with international law.

**On the second priority,** Canada will secure international recognition for the full extent of our extended continental shelf wherein we can exercise our sovereign rights over the resources of the seabed and subsoil. Most known Arctic natural resources lie within the exclusive economic zones of Arctic states—200 nautical miles extending from the coastal baselines. States have sovereign rights to explore and exploit living and non-living marine resources in their respective exclusive economic zones. Arctic coastal states also have existing rights to resources on their extended continental shelves beyond their exclusive economic zones.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) explicitly recognizes the rights of coastal states such as Canada over the natural resources of the seabed and subsoil beyond 200 nautical miles from their coastal baselines and sets out a process by which a state may determine the limits within which it may exercise those rights. Canada will make its submission to the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in December 2013 and is currently engaged in the scientific, technical and legal work needed to delineate the outer limits of its continental shelf. Autonomous underwater vehicles—with Canadian technology at their heart—are being used to collect some of the needed data. Canada is investing significantly to ensure that Canada secures international recognition for the full extent of its continental shelf in both the Arctic and Atlantic oceans.

The other Arctic coastal states also have extended continental shelves and are involved in a similar process. To maximize data collection in a challenging physical environment, encourage exchange of information and minimize future differences, Canada has been working closely with neighbouring Arctic Ocean coastal states. We will act on a priority basis to ensure Canada has a sound submission by the 2013 deadline. Any overlaps with the submissions of neighbouring states will be resolved through peaceful means in accordance with international law.

**Beyond concrete steps** on boundaries, Canada's sovereignty agenda will also address Arctic governance and related emerging issues, such as public safety. Increasingly, the world is turning its attention northward, with many players far removed from the region itself seeking a role and in some cases calling into question the governance of the Arctic. While many of these players could have a contribution to make in the development of the North, Canada does not accept the premise that the Arctic requires a fundamentally new governance structure or legal framework. Nor does Canada accept that the Arctic nation states are unable to appropriately manage the North as it undergoes fundamental change.

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Canada, like other Arctic nations, stands by the extensive international legal framework that applies to the Arctic Ocean. Notably, UNCLOS, as referred to earlier, provides the legal basis for delineation of continental shelves and goes well beyond this to address the protection of the marine environment, freedom of navigation, marine scientific research, conservation and utilization of marine living resources, and other uses of the sea.

However, within this broad legal framework, new challenges are emerging. Until now, the Arctic Ocean's inaccessibility has meant that the region was largely insulated from the sort of safety and law enforcement challenges present in regions further south. However, decreasing ice cover will lead, over time, to increases in shipping, tourism and economic development in the Arctic Ocean region. While the full extent of the

changes will take many decades to realize, Canada and other Arctic Ocean coastal states must begin to prepare for greater traffic into the region, with sometimes negative effects.

Regional solutions, supported by robust domestic legislation in Arctic states, will be critical. Canada will work in concert with other Arctic nations through the Arctic Council<sup>1</sup> (the primary forum for collaboration among the eight Arctic states), with the five Arctic Ocean coastal states on issues of particular relevance to the Arctic Ocean, and bilaterally with key Arctic partners, particularly the United States.

We will need to consider how to respond to issues such as emergency response and search and rescue capability and potential future problems related to emergencies (including environmental), organized crime, and illegal trafficking in drugs and people. One very important initiative is the current effort within the Arctic Council to negotiate a search and rescue agreement for the Arctic. Information sharing, coordination of efforts, and pooling resources are all concrete ways in which partnership may be beneficial.

The recently held Arctic Ocean Foreign Ministers meeting was an important step not only in advancing our collaboration on continental shelf delineation but also in encouraging forward thinking on the emerging issues in the region. The meeting publicly demonstrated leadership and partnership by Canada and other coastal states on responsible management of the Arctic Ocean.

Protecting national sovereignty, and the integrity of our borders, is the first and foremost responsibility of a national government. We are resolved to protect Canadian sovereignty throughout our Arctic.

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<sup>1</sup> The Arctic Council brings together eight member states (Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden and the United States) and six Arctic indigenous groups called Permanent Participants.

## PROMOTING ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Creating a dynamic, sustainable Northern economy and improving the social well-being of Northerners is essential to unleashing the true potential of Canada's North and is an important means of exercising our sovereignty.

“Not only is the North a land of raw and majestic beauty that has inspired generations of authors, artists and adventurers, and not only is it the home to a rich culture shaped through the millennia by the wisdom of Aboriginal people, but it also holds the potential to be a transformative economic asset for the country.”

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, August 18, 2009, Iqaluit, Nunavut

The potential for wealth and job creation through resource development, both living and non-living, is great. Canada is the world's third largest diamond producer. It is estimated that one-fifth of the world's petroleum reserves lie in the Arctic. That is why the Government of Canada is investing significantly in mapping the energy and mineral potential of the North. Managed in a sustainable manner, Canada's incredible endowment, including living marine resources such as fisheries, will contribute to the prosperity of Northerners and all Canadians for generations. These resources can and will be a cornerstone of sustained economic activity in the North and a key to building prosperous indigenous and Northern communities.

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In addition to investments in mapping in the North, the Government of Canada has made a wide variety of recent commitments related to promoting Northern social and economic development. These include measures to improve regulatory systems across the North, to address infrastructure needs including housing, to create the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, and to support improvement in indigenous skills and employment.

Ensuring sustainable development in the Arctic involves working closely with territorial governments and Northerners and through key international institutions like the Arctic Council to build self-sufficient, vibrant and healthy communities. The well-being of the people of the North—its inhabitants and communities—is fundamental.

Canada will actively promote Northern economic and social development internationally on three key fronts: take steps to create the appropriate international conditions for sustainable development, seek trade and investment opportunities that benefit Northerners and all Canadians, and encourage a greater understanding of the human dimension of the Arctic to improve the lives of Northerners.

**First**, Canada will take steps to create the appropriate international conditions for sustainable development in the Arctic, complementing domestic measures to support economic development. This involves understanding the opportunities and challenges of Arctic energy and resource development and developing regulations, guidelines and standards that are informed by Arctic science and research, including traditional knowledge. In no area is this more critical than in oil and gas development.

As an emerging clean energy superpower, Canada will continue to support the responsible and sustainable development of oil and gas in the North. Along with the rest of the international community, we have witnessed the terrible environmental, social and economic impacts of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

Canada recognizes and values the importance of working closely with other Arctic states and will take every step possible to prevent such an event in Canadian waters. Canada is showing leadership at home in Arctic safety and environmental requirements for offshore drilling through the review undertaken by the National Energy Board. Moreover, Canadians and our Arctic neighbours can be assured that no drilling will occur in Canada's deep Beaufort Sea until at least 2014.

Canada is a party to a number of bilateral and multilateral agreements and is actively engaged in various international forums, including the Arctic Council, on matters relating to the protection of the marine environment. In the wake of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, we are furthering our collaboration at the appropriate levels, in particular with the United States and Denmark/Greenland in light of our common interests in the Arctic marine environment.

The 2007 Arctic Council Oil and Gas Assessment examined the impacts of current oil and gas activities in the Arctic and potential impacts related to possible future activities. The Oil and Gas Assessment found that while extensive oil and gas exploration activity and production have occurred in parts of the Arctic, much potential exists for future oil and gas development. Related risks need to be managed carefully. Canada made significant contributions to the Assessment.

The Arctic Council, with significant Canadian participation, updated its Arctic Offshore Oil and Gas Guidelines in 2009. These guidelines recommend standards, technical and environmental best practices, management policy and regulatory controls for Arctic offshore oil and gas operations. Canada will act on the request from the Arctic Council that all states apply these guidelines as minimum standards throughout the Arctic and will encourage others to do so as well.

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Arctic shipping is another key area of focus. The 2009 Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment is the first comprehensive review of circumpolar shipping activities and provides important information about possible future shipping activities and their potential impacts. Among its findings, the Assessment noted that Arctic shipping has increased significantly, with more voyages to the Arctic and between Arctic destinations. However, the various Canadian internal waterways known as Canada's "Northwest Passage" are not predicted to become a viable, large-scale transit route in the near term, in part because mobile and unpredictable ice in the Passage poses significant navigational challenges and other routes are likely to be more commercially viable.

The Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment also provides guidance on enhancing Arctic marine safety, protecting Arctic peoples and environment, and building Arctic marine infrastructure. Based on these recommendations, the 2009 Arctic Council Ministerial supported the development of a mandatory polar code for shipping by the International Maritime Organization (IMO). As an IMO member, Canada will continue to play a leading role in the development of this code. We, along with other Arctic Council states, have also agreed to work together towards an international agreement on search and rescue operations for the Arctic by 2011.

Within the IMO context, Canada has also assumed responsibility for providing navigational warning and meteorological services to facilitate the safe management of marine traffic in two Arctic areas. These cover substantial areas of Arctic waters, including the Northwest Passage. Through this initiative, Canada will deliver services that help mitigate the risks associated with increased Arctic shipping. These services will also enhance environmental protection of the Arctic marine environment, support Northern residents in their maritime activities, and provide necessary services for coastal and marine-based resource development.

Canada is playing a key role in the creation of the Arctic Regional Hydrographic Commission to improve our understanding of the features of the Arctic Ocean and its coastal areas, essential knowledge for safe navigation. Canada has offered to host the Commission's inaugural meeting in fall 2010.

**Second**, Canada will continue to seek trade and investment opportunities that benefit Northerners and all Canadians.

Canada will enhance its trading ties with other Arctic states. We have recently implemented a free trade agreement with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) member countries, which include Iceland and Norway. This agreement has the potential to enhance trade and investment between Northern regions of our respective countries. We are also seeking to build new trade ties with other Arctic states to create these

same links between our respective Northern regions. These Northern commercial relationships can serve as conduits to expand trade and investment relations not only with our immediate Northern neighbours but also with other states such as those in central Asia and Eastern Europe.

Improving air and sea transportation links to create enhanced access across the polar region can help encourage Arctic trade and investment opportunities. For instance, investments have been made to upgrade the Port of Churchill, Manitoba, to facilitate increased export options and the flow of two-way trade with other Northern ports.

**Third**, Canada will continue to encourage a greater understanding of the human dimension of the Arctic to improve the lives of Northerners, particularly through the Arctic Council. The Arctic Council's Arctic Human Development Report was the first comprehensive assessment of human well-being to address the entire Arctic region. Canada will continue to play a leadership role in Arctic Council initiatives in this area and to host the Secretariat for the Council's Sustainable Development Working Group. For example, the 2008 Arctic Indigenous Languages Symposium, organized by the Inuit Circumpolar Council with support from the Government of Canada, underlined the importance of preserving and strengthening indigenous languages.

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Addressing human health issues in Northern communities is also critically important. Canada has been supporting efforts through the Arctic Council and International Polar Year research to better understand the issues and then develop and implement appropriate health policies. The results of international collaboration are all aimed at improving the health conditions of residents in the Arctic. Canada will play a lead role in the Arctic Council on a range of new health-related projects, including the development of a circumpolar health observatory, a comparative review of circumpolar health systems, and a comparative review of circumpolar nutritional guidelines.

Canada's commitment to Northern economic and social development includes a deep respect for indigenous traditional knowledge, work and cultural activities. Going forward, Canada will promote a better understanding of the interests, concerns, culture and practices of Northerners, including with regard to seals and polar bears. In this context, Canada is committed to defend sealing on the international stage. Seals are a valuable natural resource, and the seal hunt is an economic mainstay for numerous rural communities in many parts of Canada including the North.

## PROTECTING THE ARCTIC ENVIRONMENT

The Arctic environment is being affected by events taking place far outside the region. Perhaps the most well-known example is climate change, a phenomenon which originates outside the Arctic but is having a significant impact on the region's unique and fragile environment. The resulting rapid reduction in Arctic multi-year sea ice has had, and will continue to have, profound consequences for the peoples and communities of the Arctic. What happens in the Arctic will have global repercussions on accelerating climate change elsewhere.

Strong environmental protection, an essential component of sustainable development, starts at home and is another important way in which Canada exercises its sovereignty in the North. Canada has long been at the forefront in protecting the Arctic environment. As far back as the 1970s, Canada enacted the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act (AWPPA) to protect its marine environment, taking responsibility for enacting and enforcing anti-pollution and shipping safety laws applicable to a larger area of Arctic waters. In August 2009, the application of the AWPPA was extended from 100 to 200 nautical miles. In addition, regulations requiring vessels to report when entering and operating within Canadian Arctic waters have been finalized and are in force from July 1, 2010.

“Canada takes responsibility for environmental protection and enforcement in our Arctic waters. This magnificent and unspoiled region is one for which we will demonstrate stewardship on behalf of our country, and indeed, all of humanity.”

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, August 27, 2008, Tuktoyaktuk, Northwest Territories

These measures and others such as plans to establish a national marine conservation area in Lancaster Sound send a clear message to the world. Canada takes responsibility for environmental protection and enforcement in our Arctic waters. We are demonstrating stewardship in this magnificent ecological region.

Canada is committed to planning and managing Arctic Ocean and land-based activities domestically and internationally in an integrated and comprehensive manner that balances conservation, sustainable use and economic development—ensuring benefits for users and the ecosystem as a whole. We are acting domestically while cooperating internationally. Internationally, we will act in the following four ways: promote an ecosystem-based management approach with our Arctic neighbours and others; contribute to and support international efforts to address climate change in the Arctic; enhance efforts on other pressing international issues, including pursuing and strengthening international standards; and strengthen Arctic science and the legacy of International Polar Year.

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**First**, Canada will continue to promote an ecosystem-based management approach with its Arctic neighbours and others.

In accordance with Canada’s Oceans Act, Canada is working with land claim authorities, governments, industry and communities to implement an ecosystem approach in the Beaufort Sea and has identified ecologically significant marine species and places. This is part of a broader ecosystem approach in the Arctic by the Government of Canada that also includes activities related to the international co-management of species in the Arctic whose habitat crosses national borders (e.g. caribou, polar

bears and Arctic birds). These activities fall under international conventions and agreements such as the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, the Migratory Bird Treaty, and the Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears. International collaborative Arctic science and research is a fundamental aspect of the Government of Canada's participation in such agreements.

Canada and its Arctic neighbours are the stewards of unique wildlife such as polar bears. The Government of Canada recognizes the importance of indigenous knowledge and the need to use it in tandem with Western science in our efforts to better understand polar bears and their habitat.

Canada has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the United States for the conservation and management of a shared polar bear population. In addition, Canada has developed agreements with other Arctic nations to jointly manage polar bears, narwhals and belugas. This work must continue in order to manage other shared species.

As part of its mandate, the Arctic Council has been playing a lead role in identifying large marine ecosystems in the region and determining best practices in ocean management. Canada will play a leadership role in the Arctic Council's Arctic Ocean Review which aims to strengthen and ensure the sustainable development of the Arctic Ocean. In pursuing strengthened Arctic Ocean stewardship, we will work with other interested partners and users of the Arctic Ocean as well as through regional and international organizations, including the Arctic Council and the IMO.

2010 is the International Year of Biodiversity and the Arctic is the focus of considerable attention. Canada will continue to lead the Arctic Council's Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program to ensure information on population status and trends for Arctic species and ecosystems is available and supports initiatives such as the Arctic Biodiversity Assessment. The Council has recently developed the Arctic Species Trend Index, which provides decision-makers with a valuable tool for managing and predicting Arctic wildlife populations. Tracking the index over time will facilitate this prediction of trends and identify species and groups experiencing rapid change.

Canada will continue to establish terrestrial and marine protected areas in the Arctic and monitor biodiversity and ecological integrity. Canada recognizes that ecologically sensitive areas are essential for the conservation of Arctic species including polar bears, caribous, migratory birds, and marine mammals and other aquatic species. These sensitive areas play a key role in the survival and recovery of species at risk. They also provide significant ecotourism opportunities to an expanding market of Canadians and international visitors.

Canada has made significant progress in establishing protected areas in over 10 percent of our North, designating 80 protected areas covering nearly 400,000 square kilometres. These areas include 11 national parks, six national wildlife areas and 16 migratory bird sanctuaries and will protect habitat for a wide variety of species.

Canada continues to plan for additional protected areas in the North and has an ambitious program to expand the national park system, including the creation of three new national parks. The Government of Canada is moving forward in consultation with communities and industry to add nearly 70,000 square kilometres to Canada's Northern protected areas network. Canada will be finalizing a Policy Framework for Canada's National Network of Marine Protected Areas that will guide marine protected area establishment, including the five marine ecoregions found in the Arctic. The creation of the majority of existing national parks in the Arctic proceeded hand-in-hand with land claim negotiations, as are all of the new national park proposals.

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**Second**, Canada will continue to actively contribute to and support international efforts to address climate change in the Arctic, including both mitigation and adaptation in the Arctic. Climate change is having a disproportionate impact on the Arctic, and the Arctic Council's 2004 Arctic Climate Impact Assessment heightened global awareness of the problem.

Canada recognizes that climate change is a global challenge requiring a global solution. To that end, the government is committed to contributing to the global effort by taking action to reduce Canada's greenhouse gas emissions through sustained action domestically to build a low-carbon economy, working with our North American partners and constructively engaging with our international partners to negotiate a fair, environmentally effective and comprehensive international climate change regime based on the Copenhagen Accord. Canada has been, and continues to be, very active in these international negotiations, and will seek to ensure that consideration is given to the Arctic's unique set of climate change-related challenges in every relevant forum.

New evidence suggests that certain short-term factors are having an impact on the rate of climate change. The 2009 Arctic Council Ministerial approved the formation of a task force on "short-lived climate forcers" in the Arctic. While climate agents or forcers, such as black carbon,<sup>2</sup> contribute significantly to climate change, they can potentially be brought under control much more quickly than long-term contributors such as carbon dioxide. The task force will identify existing and new measures to reduce emissions of these forcers and will recommend further immediate action.

Canada has been, and will continue to be, active in climate change adaptation initiatives. Canada played an important role in the Arctic Council's recent Vulnerability and Adaptation to Climate Change in the Arctic project. Underlining the importance of community involvement in planning for and responding to climate change adaptation is one of Canada's key contributions. Canada recognizes that enhanced action on adaptation will be a significant component of the post-2012 climate change negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Canada plays an active and constructive role in those discussions.

In support of these objectives, the Government of Canada has been working in close partnership with Northern communities and governments to assess risks, vulnerabilities

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<sup>2</sup> Black carbon (soot and methane), released by car engines and fires, can darken ice and snow, increasing their rate of melting.

and opportunities related to a changing climate. Over the last two years, over 60 projects have been funded in the Canadian Arctic that have led to the development of community and regional adaptation plans, increasing knowledge and understanding of climate-related implications and the development of strong partnerships essential to implementing adaptation action.

**Third**, Canada will enhance its efforts on other pressing environmental issues, including pursuing and strengthening international standards, where appropriate. Canada will continue to engage in the negotiation of an international regime on access to genetic resources and the sharing of their benefits, under the Convention on Biological Diversity. Researchers around the world are interested in genetic resources found in extreme environments like the Arctic. We recognize the importance of these issues to Northerners and Northern communities.

Persistent organic pollutants and mercury, released far from the Arctic, have had serious impacts on Arctic peoples. Canada and the Inuit Circumpolar Council<sup>3</sup> played an important role in the negotiation of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. Canada will continue to address the problems arising from these contaminants, including waste management practices in the North, and will engage actively in global negotiations to reduce mercury emissions.

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Canada is setting an international example with the Federal Contaminated Sites Action Plan. The government is providing \$3.5 billion over 15 years to address federal contaminated sites, with the majority of resources directed to contaminated sites in the North. Canada is contributing to the global effort to address mercury emissions with a plan to implement new environmental performance standards that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pollutants such as mercury from coal-fired electricity generating plants. An international agreement on the reduction of mercury emissions will help reduce the impact of mercury on the health and the environment of Canadians, particularly in the North.

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<sup>3</sup> Formerly the Inuit Circumpolar Conference.

**Fourth**, Canada will contribute to strengthening Arctic science and the legacy of International Polar Year. Arctic science forms an important foundation for Canada's Northern Strategy, providing the knowledge necessary for sound policy and decision-making both on domestic and international issues. To ensure that Canada remains a global leader in Arctic science, the Government of Canada has committed to establishing a new world-class research station in the High Arctic that will serve Canada and the world, and work is proceeding on its development. The station will anchor a strong research presence in Canada's Arctic and to complement these efforts, Canada has also invested in upgrading existing research facilities in over 30 sites across the Arctic.

Canada made one of the largest single contributions of any country to International Polar Year and will be hosting its final wrap-up event in Montreal in April 2012. Canada is also taking a lead role in the Arctic Council's Sustaining Arctic Observing Networks project. Its purpose is to further international engagement in developing sustained and coordinated pan-Arctic observing and data-sharing systems, particularly related to environmental, social, economic and cultural issues.

## **IMPROVING AND DEVOLVING GOVERNANCE: EMPOWERING THE PEOPLES OF THE NORTH**

The Government of Canada is committed to providing Canadian Northerners with more control over their economic and political destiny. Canada is taking steps to endorse the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in a manner fully consistent with Canada's Constitution and laws. In recent decades, Canada's Northern governments have taken on greater responsibility for many aspects of their region's affairs. Progress is continuing in this area and represents another way in which Canada is exercising its sovereignty in the Arctic. Canada's North is also home to some of the most innovative, consultative approaches to government in Canada and the world. Through land claim and self-government agreements, indigenous communities are developing made-in-the-North policies and strategies to address their unique economic and social challenges and opportunities.

“ We’re committed to helping the region and its residents realize their true potential.”

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, March 10, 2008, Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

Canada recognizes and values the important role Northern governments, Arctic Indigenous organizations at the Arctic Council (known as Permanent Participant organizations) and other Northerners have played, and will continue to play, in shaping Canada’s international actions. Canada’s Arctic foreign policy bolsters our domestic efforts for strong governance in the North in the following three ways.

**First**, Canada will engage with Northerners on Canada’s Arctic foreign policy. Through the Canadian Arctic Council Advisory Committee, Northern governments and Indigenous Permanent Participant organizations in Canada<sup>4</sup> will have the opportunity to actively participate in shaping Canadian policy on Arctic issues. We will continue to meet regularly in Canada’s North to find common ground and work towards common objectives.

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**Second**, the Government of Canada will continue to support Indigenous Permanent Participant organizations in Canada, including financially, to contribute to strengthening their capacity to fully participate in the activities of the Arctic Council. Furthermore, Canada will encourage other Arctic Council states to support the participation of their Permanent Participant organizations. Canada will also support the continued unique status of Permanent Participant organizations at the Arctic Council, which was created to provide for their active participation and full consultation. As interest by non-Arctic players in the work of the Council grows, Canada will work to ensure that the central role of the Permanent Participants is not diminished or diluted.

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<sup>4</sup> There are six Arctic Council Permanent Participant organizations, of which three have significant membership in Canada. These are the Inuit Circumpolar Council, the Gwich’in Council International, and the Arctic Athabaskan Council.

**Third**, Canada will provide Canadian youth with opportunities to participate in the circumpolar dialogue. The Canadian Arctic Council Advisory Committee chose three young Canadians to attend the 2009 Arctic Council Ministerial meeting. Their participation enhanced the contribution of the Canadian delegation at this meeting, and this successful initiative is one that Canada will continue to support.

## THE WAY FORWARD

The rapid pace of change and growing importance of the Arctic requires that we enhance our capacity to deliver on Canada's priorities on the international scene. Facing the challenges and seizing the opportunities that we face often require finding ways to work with others: through bilateral relations with our neighbours in the Arctic, through regional mechanisms like the Arctic Council, and through other multilateral institutions.

The United States is our premier partner in the Arctic and our goal is a more strategic engagement on Arctic issues. This includes working together on issues related to the Beaufort Sea, on Arctic science, on Aboriginal and Northern issues, and on a common agenda that we might pursue when first Canada and then the United States chairs the Arctic Council starting in 2013. We are also working with Russia, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Iceland to advance shared interests such as trade and transportation, environmental protection, natural resource development, the role of indigenous peoples, oceans management, climate change adaptation and scientific cooperation.

However, the key foundation for any collaboration will be acceptance of and respect for the perspectives and knowledge of Northerners and Arctic states' sovereignty. As well, there must be recognition that the Arctic states remain best placed to exercise leadership in the management of the region.

Canada was the first chair of the Arctic Council (1996-98) and will be chairing the Council again starting in 2013. The Arctic Council is the leading multilateral forum

through which we advance our Arctic foreign policy and promote Canadian Northern interests. It is a consensus-based, high-level intergovernmental forum that promotes the environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic region. The unique structure of the Council brings both the eight Arctic states and the six Arctic Indigenous Permanent Participants together around a common agenda—enhancing the strength and effectiveness of this unique multilateral forum.

Canada will engage with Northern governments and Permanent Participants to ensure that the Arctic Council continues to respond to the region’s challenges and opportunities, thus furthering our national interests.

From Canada’s perspective, the Council needs to be strengthened to ensure that it is equipped to address tomorrow’s challenges. Canada will act on several fronts.

**First**, we will pursue a greater policy dialogue within the Council. The Council has traditionally played a strong role in science, research, monitoring and assessments, and the development of guidelines (e.g. for oil and gas) in some select areas. Canada will play a proactive role as the Council moves forward to encourage the implementation of guidelines, the development of “best practices” and, where appropriate, the negotiation of policy instruments. The current negotiation of a regional search and rescue agreement (the first ever attempt at a binding instrument under the rubric of the Arctic Council) will serve as an important test case and will inform the scope for future policy endeavours. Canada will also work to ensure that the research activities of the Council continue to focus on key emerging issues to ensure that solid knowledge underpins the policy work of the Council.

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**Second**, Canada will lead efforts to develop a more strategic communications role for the Arctic Council. As the profile of the Arctic increases, the image of the Council and information about the broad range of cutting-edge work that it is doing need to

be bolstered. In this vein, a greater outreach role for the Council will increase both the understanding of the interests of Arctic states and people, and of the Council and its mandate.

**Third**, Canada will work with other member states to address the structural needs of the organization. While the current informal nature of the body has served Canada well for many years, the growing demands on the organization may require changes to make it more robust. Canada will work with other Arctic states to develop options, including with respect to the role of the Council, related “secretariat” functions, and funding issues.

Beyond the Arctic Council, Canada will work through other multilateral institutions such as the International Maritime Organization and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change towards global solutions to issues like polar shipping regulations and climate change. Arctic-specific organizations such as the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians for the Arctic Region, the Northern Forum, and the University of the Arctic are important partners on a variety of issues.

The increasing accessibility of the Arctic has led to a widespread perception that the region could become a source of conflict. This has led to heightened interest in the Arctic in a number of international organizations including NATO and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Canada does not anticipate any military challenges in the Arctic and believes that the region is well managed through existing institutions, particularly the Arctic Council. We will continue to monitor discussion of Arctic issues in other international forums and intervene when necessary to protect Canada’s interests.

Canada is taking other steps to demonstrate leadership, such as the 2010 Arctic Ocean Foreign Ministers meeting. In addition, a new Arctic regional policy and program centre at Canada’s Embassy in Norway has been established, strengthening our

on-the-ground interaction and influence in the region. This Canadian International Centre for the Arctic Region is part of a broader concerted effort to support Canada's foreign policy goals and commercial linkages through analysis, advocacy and outreach—further enhancing Canada's presence on Arctic issues abroad.

## CONCLUSION

Through our Arctic foreign policy, we will deliver on the international dimension of our Northern Strategy. We will show leadership in demonstrating responsible stewardship while we build a region responsive to Canadian interests and values, secure in the knowledge that the North is our home and our destiny.

Through our Arctic foreign policy, we are also sending a clear message: Canada is in control of its Arctic lands and waters and takes its stewardship role and responsibilities seriously. Canada continues to stand up for its interests in the Arctic. When positions or actions are taken by others that affect our national interests, undermine the cooperative relationships we have built, or demonstrate a lack of sensitivity to the interests or perspectives of Arctic peoples or states, we respond.

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Cooperation, diplomacy and respect for international law have always been Canada's preferred approach in the Arctic. At the same time, we will never waver in our commitment to protect our North.

“ The True North is our destiny...To not embrace its promise now at the dawn of its ascendancy would be to turn our backs on what it is to be Canadian...As Prime Minister Diefenbaker said...in 1961, ‘There is a new world emerging above the Arctic Circle.’ It is this world, a new world for all the peoples of the Arctic regions that we in Canada are working to build.”

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, August 2008, Inuvik, Northwest Territories

