



Speech

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Check Against Delivery

Notes for an Address by
the Honourable Lawrence Cannon,
Minister of Foreign Affairs,
on Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy

I am happy to be in Whitehorse this afternoon to talk about Canada's Arctic foreign policy, which is one of my most important priorities. This is the beginning of a series of events during which I will have the opportunity to demonstrate my strong commitment to Arctic issues.

The Arctic is an emerging region on the cusp of major change. Northerners were the first to notice the effects of climate change on their environment and, more importantly, on their lives. You have shown remarkable resiliency and vision over the years.

I am committed to ensuring that the international spotlight stays focused on the challenges and opportunities facing the Arctic. One way to do this will be through a renewed focus on the role and importance of the Arctic Council—the premier international forum for Arctic cooperation. In addition, enhancing our Northern conversation domestically and with our bilateral partners will be key.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of a famous voyage of Arctic exploration by a great Canadian, Captain J.E. Bernier, on behalf of the Canadian government. With help from Inuit guides, he travelled to the far reaches of the vast territory that Great Britain transferred to the Dominion of Canada in 1880.

In 1909, Canada was only 42 years old, a booming country of 6.8 million people. The North was

part of this spirit of growth. For the first time in 1909, voters had elected the entire Yukon Territorial Council. The “race to the North Pole” and Arctic exploration in general were big news then. Today, the Arctic and the North are back on the international and domestic agenda as never before.

Much has changed since Captain Bernier’s epic voyage to the Arctic. Melting polar ice, new technologies, and demands for energy and other natural resources are bringing profound changes for the region’s inhabitants and its environment. There is also growing international interest in the Arctic, even from such far-off countries as Italy, Japan, South Korea, China and India.

Canada is an Arctic nation and an Arctic power. Canada’s Arctic and North make up over 40 percent of our land mass. We occupy a major portion of the Arctic. The Arctic and the North are part of our national identity.

Our North is home to more than 100,000 Canadians across three territories—the Yukon, the Northwest Territories and, most recently, Nunavut. It also includes areas of the Canadian provinces that reflect northern conditions. Many Northern inhabitants are Inuit and First Nations, whose ancestors have inhabited the region for millennia.

Canada’s sovereignty over the Arctic lands and waters is long-standing, well established and based on historic title.

Preparing future generations for the opportunities and challenges to come is a central goal, and one that institutions like Yukon College pursue. So I am pleased to announce today that the federal government will create a graduate student fellowship on Canada’s role in the circumpolar world. Twenty of these fellowships will be provided to students across Canada over the next two years. In this way, we will draw on the energy and insights of our future leaders.

Integrated Northern Strategy

That is why our government has announced an Integrated Northern Strategy resting on four pillars: protecting our environmental heritage, promoting economic and social development, exercising our sovereignty, and improving and devolving governance. Through robust Arctic foreign policy, we are delivering on the international dimension of each of the four elements of this strategy. We are affirming our leadership, stewardship and ownership in the region.

A clear Canadian Arctic policy will help create an environment in which we can successfully implement our Integrated Northern Strategy.

Environment

Since 2006, the Canadian government has taken many steps to protect and preserve our unique Arctic environment. We will build on this solid foundation to respond to emerging issues, from chemical pollutants, shipping safety and search and rescue, to climate change.

We recognize that climate change is having a disproportionate impact on the Arctic and its inhabitants, though experts do not agree on the pace of this dramatic change. Some experts, for example, predicted recently that the entire Arctic could be ice free in summer by 2013; others say this will happen by 2050. Our own Canadian Ice Service, however, believes that the Northwest Passage will likely not be a reliable commercial shipping route for decades owing to extreme ice variability.

But there can be no doubt that we must be ready to act now, understanding that we hold in trust a

treasure for future generations.

The North's changing temperatures, melting snow and ice, and worrisome contaminant levels in local foods are the result of activities that may have taken place thousands of miles away from the Arctic. We will therefore work through appropriate multilateral institutions like the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to address these challenges. And we will continue to play a leading role in the development of guidelines for Arctic shipping through the International Maritime Organization.

Canada has long been at the forefront in protecting the Arctic environment. As far back as 1970, Canada proclaimed the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act to protect the marine environment.

During his latest visit to the Arctic on August 27, 2008, Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced that the Government of Canada will extend the application of the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act from its present 100-nautical-mile zone. Our purpose is to regulate all shipping in zones up to 200 nautical miles from the baselines of the Canadian territorial sea.

In addition, the Prime Minister announced that Canada will establish new regulations under the Canada Shipping Act, which will require mandatory reporting for all ships destined for Canada's Arctic waters within the same 200 nautical-mile limit.

As marine traffic to the North increases, the Government of Canada will adapt the regulations and systems already in place to protect Canadian interests.

The Government of Canada has also pledged an enhanced surveillance and military presence in the Canadian Arctic waters. We are implementing an ecosystem-based approach to oceans management in the Beaufort Sea and elsewhere.

We are establishing an Arctic Marine Protected Area in Lancaster Sound in the eastern Arctic, and we have set aside land for the expansion of the Nahanni National Park in the western Arctic.

Under the leadership of my colleague Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development [and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians], our government has built on this foundation with an investment of over \$150 million for the International Polar Year.

We have focused global efforts on climate change impacts and adaptation. We have highlighted a Canadian priority—the health and well-being of our Northern communities—through the work of my colleague Minister [of Health Leona] Aglukkaq.

A legacy investment will be the establishment of a world-class high arctic research station that will be on the cutting edge of Arctic issues, including environmental science and resource development. In the 2009 budget, our government committed \$85 million over the next two years to upgrade key Arctic science and technology facilities, and an additional \$2 million for a feasibility study on the arctic research station.

Economic and Social Development

The human dimension of the Arctic—ensuring economic and social development in a sustainable way that benefits Arctic inhabitants, particularly Indigenous peoples—is a key objective for Canada.

That is why we have played a lead role, along with partners, in the Arctic Council's *Arctic Human Development Report*, *Oil and Gas Assessment* and its soon-to-be-released *Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment*.

We work closely with territorial governments and Northerners both domestically and internationally to help build vibrant, healthy and sustainable communities. This includes learning from traditional knowledge and supporting traditional economic activities such as the seal hunt.

Canada's North has significant resource potential, including part of the estimated 20 percent of the world's petroleum reserves in the Arctic, and Canadian companies supported by our researchers are developing technologies applicable to an Arctic environment.

We can also benefit from foreign investment innovation and expertise in that area. We are committed to ensuring that these economic benefits flow to Northerners.

Sovereignty

Activity in the Arctic lands and waters is increasing, and so has our capacity in the North. Our first duty as Canada's national government is to exercise, responsibly, our sovereign rights in the region.

Prime Minister Harper is a strong advocate of Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic.

On August 10, 2007, he unveiled three new initiatives to further demonstrate Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic:

- the establishment of a Canadian Forces Arctic Training Centre in Resolute Bay, Nunavut, is now a reality;
- the expansion of the size and capabilities of the Canadian Rangers by 900 members, with upgraded and modernized uniforms, weapons and transport vehicles is under way; and
- [work on] a deepwater Arctic docking and refuelling facility in Nanisivik, Nunavut, is expected to begin in 2011, with anticipated initial operating capability in 2012 and final capability in 2015.

A new, more advanced, polar-class icebreaker is being built, to be named after the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker, Canada's 13th prime minister, who was a lifelong champion of investing in and protecting the Canadian North.

The Canadian Forces, as part of their mandate, frequently conduct patrols in the Arctic. Exercises such as Operation Nanook demonstrate a visible Canadian presence in the Arctic.

With the acquisition of new Arctic offshore patrol ships, the Canadian navy will be able to operate in all three oceans, providing surveillance, search and rescue, and support to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Canadian Coast Guard, and other government departments and agencies.

The Canadian Forces plays an important role in the region and ensures that Canada can assist in responding to any emergency—from an oil spill to a plane crash.

It is also important to determine where Canada can exercise its sovereign rights. That is the point behind the work being done to delineate the outer limits of Canada's extended continental shelf.

The United Nations Convention Law of the Sea explicitly recognizes Canada's sovereign rights over its continental shelf and sets out a process for a coastal state like Canada to secure international recognition for the precise limits of its continental shelf.

My government has invested significantly—\$40 million over four years for a total expenditure of \$109 million over the course of the project—to ensure that Canada secures recognition for the maximum extent of its continental shelf in both the Arctic and the Atlantic.

The process to delineate the extended continental shelf is orderly and lengthy; it is not adversarial and it is not a race. It is a collaborative process based on a shared commitment to international law. Canada is cooperating with its Arctic neighbours, the United States, Denmark and Russia, in this scientific work.

Governance

Improving and devolving governance is a domestic priority in Canada. Real efforts have been made to ensure that decisions affecting Northerners are brought closer to the communities themselves, so that Northerners have more control over their own destinies.

Through our Arctic foreign policy, we affirm and strengthen our domestic efforts for strong governance in the North. We recognize and value the important role that the leadership of Indigenous groups and Northerners have played in shaping our international actions. We will continue to provide opportunities for engagement, to further strengthening the voices of our Northern communities.

Pursuing Canadian Arctic Interests Internationally

The depth and complexity of the challenges facing the Arctic are significant, and we recognize the importance of addressing many of these issues by working with our neighbours—through the Arctic Council, other multilateral institutions and our bilateral partnerships.

Increasing interest in the Arctic has led to an increased focus on international Arctic governance. Strong Canadian leadership in the Arctic will continue to facilitate good international governance in the region.

We have an extensive, existing international legal framework that applies to the Arctic Ocean, notably the law of the sea, which covers continental shelf delimitation, marine environment protection and other uses of the sea.

In the 2008 Ilulissat Declaration, all five Arctic Ocean coastal states reaffirmed their commitment to the framework established by the law of the sea, including peaceful resolution of any competing interests.

Arctic Council

Canada and Canadians played a leading role in the establishment of the Arctic Council. We would now like to re-energize the Council. This unique organization brings both states and Indigenous peoples to the table. Moreover, it has laid the foundation for strong, responsible and cooperative governance of the Arctic region.

The Council's first mission is to provide a means to promote cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic states, with the involvement of the Arctic Indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants, on common Arctic issues. Since its inception, the Council has successfully developed a common agenda among Arctic states and permanent participants. But as the region changes, so must its institutions.

We need more research on some of the key emerging issues with regard to sustainable development and environmental protection facing the Arctic. We need to deepen our exchange of best practices and explore a more rigorous discussion on policy issues and coordination.

The Arctic Council needs to play a greater outreach and advocacy role, making sure that the interests and concerns of Arctic inhabitants are reflected in the deliberations of other multilateral institutions. For example, Canada will continue to build on strong foundations such as the United

National Framework Convention on Climate Change to respond to emerging issues and meet the needs of Northerners.

The Arctic Council must have the necessary strength, resources and influence to respond effectively to emerging challenges affecting the Arctic. It must be able to turn the high-calibre scientific work produced by the Council's working groups into information that Northern communities and peoples can effectively use.

Canadian leadership will continue to facilitate good international governance in the region.

I pledge Canada's continued high-level commitment to the Arctic Council through a renewed emphasis on its effectiveness as an international policy-making forum for Arctic cooperation.

I look forward to discussing these issues with my counterparts and with permanent participants when I attend the Arctic Council Ministerial in Tromsø, Norway in April, 2009.

Bilateral Relationships

We will continue to engage our Arctic neighbours at the highest level to promote a stable, rules-based region. This will provide the foundation for sustainable economic and social development and for environmental protection.

The United States is our premier partner in the Arctic, and I look forward to raising the issue of a more enhanced level of cooperation on Arctic issues with my colleague, U.S. Secretary of State [Hillary] Clinton, in the near future.

Obviously, we have many shared interests and common purposes—in environmental stewardship, search and rescue, safety, security and sustainable resource development.

I also intend to explore ways to pursue a common agenda, starting in 2013, as Canada, and then the United States, chair the Arctic Council.

We work with the Russian Federation to advance common interests, such as the Memorandum of Understanding signed between Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Russia's Ministry of Regional Development to examine cooperative projects with Indigenous peoples.

I will explore with my Russian counterpart how we might work more closely, including through our Arctic and North Working Group.

We also have common interests with and things to learn from our other Arctic neighbours—Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Iceland. I met the foreign ministers of Norway and Finland on the margins of the NATO meeting this month and had a discussion on the Arctic.

We are currently exploring how trade, innovation and investment can support sustainable Northern development.

Our annual bilateral Northern Dialogue with Norway, for instance, covers issues such as climate change adaptation, oil and gas development, oceans management, and scientific cooperation.

We are also working with non-Arctic states on Arctic issues. The most recent example would be with the U.K. on Arctic and Antarctic polar science research.

As Canada's Minister for Foreign Affairs, I am making it my utmost priority to further strengthen our bilateral engagement with Arctic states. That is why I have embarked on my own Arctic expedition, and will be visiting Arctic capitals to further Canada's Arctic interests. I will travel first to

Washington, D.C., and then to Europe.

One hundred years after Bernier and many other brave Canadians, it is our generation's turn to commit ourselves to protecting and developing our common legacy—the unique, splendid Canadian Arctic.

Through the international dimension of our Northern Strategy, we will protect our environmental heritage, promote economic and social development, exercise our sovereignty in this vital region and encourage more effective international governance.

One hundred years ago, Captain Bernier led a voyage through the Arctic. He, and other explorers since, credited their survival to the help afforded them by Northerners.

This spirit of cooperation and respect, demonstrated 100 years ago in the Canadian North, has established a uniquely Canadian legacy that still guides our actions today.

Through the strength of our domestic and international partnerships we will continue to seize opportunities and address changes and challenges—together.

Thank you.