

Speaking notes for Mr. Bob Mills, Member of Parliament for Red Deer
Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting
On the occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of the Arctic Council
Thursday, October 26, 2006
Salekhard, Russian Federation

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Introductory:

- I would like to express our appreciation to Governor Neelov for the very warm hospitality shown by the peoples of Salekhard to me and the Canadian delegation present here today.
- I am also personally pleased to be visiting here as Yamal-Nenets has many close ties with Canada, including being twinned with my home province of Alberta.
- In addition, I also acknowledge the local indigenous peoples and thank them for playing such an active role in both the Council's work and for hosting us here.
- Minister Lavrov, let me express Canada's sincere thanks for your leadership, and that of your team during the past two years of Russia's Arctic Council Chairmanship. You have made an important contribution in moving the work of the Arctic Council forward and placing greater emphasis on the economic and social agenda.
- I am pleased to be here on behalf of the Government of Canada, and bring warm wishes from the Honourable Peter MacKay, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs. I also acknowledge my Parliamentary colleague, Mark Eyking who travelled with me to be here today.
- It was 1989 when Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney proposed in a speech in what was then Leningrad "a council of Arctic Countries eventually coming into existence to coordinate and promote cooperation among them."

Arctic Council

- I can say with confidence that Canada is proud to have played such a significant role in the establishment of the Council especially now that we are celebrating its 10th anniversary.
- The fact that the Council has in the past ten years identified challenges and opportunities that Arctic Peoples face with the direct involvement of Indigenous Peoples is a model which other international bodies should take note of.
- We should also acknowledge that this unique arrangement called the Arctic Council has taken “Arctic Issues” to the larger world and in the words of our Permanent Participant colleagues – put the human face on the important issues facing the Arctic and North.
- Canada believes that the future of the Council is promising, and we will continue to work in cooperation with all of you to ensure that Arctic and North issues continue to be identified and acted upon for the benefit of our northern residents.
- I would further add that we view our membership in the Arctic Council as essential to our ability to pursue priorities for Northern Canadians and for Canada as a whole.
- Among the domestic priorities that relate to the Council are:
 - Resource development
 - Balancing ecological protection with economic prosperity
 - Ensuring benefits of development are available to Northerners
- The Arctic Council provides the opportunity to learn from each other’s experiences, share best practices, and work toward common solutions based on our shared interest.

- It also remains the key mechanism for Canada's international circumpolar work and as I mentioned, Canada will continue to work with its northern partners including the territories and indigenous peoples, and Arctic neighbours to address the many issues and opportunities we face in the North.
- The unique nature of this body dictates that the Council must be able to respond to new ideas, trends and initiatives, as well as be able to refocus activities to meet emerging priorities.
- I think that today's Arctic Council meets the test. Canadian priorities such as the current oil and gas assessment in the Arctic will go a long way to giving us a complete picture of this important economic activity from the benefits, to the challenges faced by northern communities and ecosystems.
- With respect to ecosystems, the Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring program is without a doubt an important mechanism that brings together the various scientific networks, and ensures that communities and northerners have appropriate influence in determining the outcomes necessary so that the findings can be used and tailored to their local needs. Significant progress has been achieved under Canadian leadership.
- The planned Biodiversity Assessment is a priority for Permanent Participants and Member States
- With changing climate, thinning ice, and resource development, it is important to take stock of whether we are prepared for emerging economic opportunities. The Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment will help in this regard by looking at both present and future shipping patterns, and the associated environmental and socio-economic impacts.

- Canada notes the importance of the Russian Federation's Arctic National Program of Action for addressing land based sources of Arctic marine pollution. Along with similar action programs of other Arctic countries support the Arctic Council's vision of a healthy and productive Arctic Ocean and coasts that support environmental, economic and social and cultural values for current and future generations.
- Canada believes that one of the most robust working groups in the Council is the one that looks at sustainable development issues. This is where many of the people-centred issues and initiatives are discussed, and an area where we often see a direct impact on Northerner's daily lives.
- Canada's commitment to constructive engagement with our circumpolar neighbours and global community is enhanced through the many projects that we have chosen to play a direct role in.
- I won't enumerate the whole list, but initiatives dealing with Arctic Indigenous languages, Information and Communications Technologies, ArcticStat, and International Circumpolar surveillance, prevention and control of emerging infectious diseases in the Arctic come to mind as initiatives that serve both the Canadian and International interest.
- The upcoming Norwegian chairmanship will most certainly be an important time in the life of the Council. I understand that Norway has identified an ambitious agenda for the next two years that will look at policy directions as well as the mechanics for how the Council works.
- And while we will hear the specifics of Norway's plan for their chairmanship later on today, I will take this opportunity to commit that Canada will play a constructive role with Norway and the Arctic Council in finding better and more efficient ways to undertake the Council's work.

- Certainly one of the things that will influence the Council's policy agenda for the foreseeable future is the International Polar Year. This extraordinary event will shine a bright light on the Arctic and Antarctic and we hope that this unprecedented attention will assist us in engaging more people and resources to assist the Arctic Council in carrying out its work.
- As an Arctic nation, Canada is doing its part. We take great pride in supporting the IPY and have committed \$150 million in federal funding, which will most certainly leverage a great deal more. In addition, we are looking forward to welcoming the many scientists and researchers to our North.

Environment

- I will now take a moment to speak to Environmental issues. The ACIA as we all know was a groundbreaking report that has attracted global attention to the state of the Arctic environment.
- We all know the conclusions articulated by the report. The task now is to move forward and address the challenges head on, both here in the Council and in our respective countries.
- The Council has over the past two years been working on the necessary response to the ACIA and Canada is confident that the next two years will bring even more progress. We would see work in the area of adaptation as being a logical next step for the Arctic Council to pursue in responding to the ACIA.
- We also recognise that much work remains to be done at the international, domestic and regional levels. On the national level, I am pleased to tell you that **Canada's Clean Air Act** was tabled in Parliament last week.
- This act will enhance our monitoring, reporting, enforcement, and auditing powers to ensure pollution is reduced. It will show Canadians and our international partners that we are very serious about setting goals and achieving results.

- The Clean Air Act includes all sectors in Canada and will have mandatory requirements. They will be enforced and penalties levied against polluters. Other measures will also include greenhouse gas emission targets and initiatives to improve quality of life and health of Canadians by tackling pollution problems. We will also promote the development of new technologies, such as CO2 capture and sequestration and coal gasification to name a couple.
- In other words, Canada wants REAL reductions in pollution and greenhouse gases.

Conclusion

- The first Arctic Council meeting took place in 1996 in Ottawa. We have come a long way in the last ten years.
- Arctic residents are far better equipped now than in the past, to participate vigorously and constructively in national, regional and global political and economic decision-making.
- Positive changes have occurred in both the policy and legal relationships between Northerners and governments, creating a more equitable basis for the productive partnership that will continue to emerge. Our collective responsibility is to continue building on these accomplishments and new directions.
- The Norwegian chair offers us the opportunity to continue this important work and Canada remains committed to playing our part.
- Once again, I thank our hosts and congratulate the Russian Federation on a successful chairmanship of the Arctic Council.