

## **Address by Foreign Affairs Minister at the Arctic Council Ministerial Meeting**

**May 7, 2019 - Rovaniemi, Finland**

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Let me start by thanking Finland for hosting us here so very warmly in Rovaniemi. Canadians will always feel very much at home in a hockey rink.

And I want to thank you very much, Timo [Soini, Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs], and your entire team for the excellent work you've done chairing the Arctic Council for the past two years. And let me add that Canada is also very pleased to support the excellent chairman's statement.

So thank you for that as well.

We look forward to working with Iceland as you assume the chairmanship for the next two years. And I would like to say that Canada is very lucky to have particularly close relationships with Finland and Iceland in part due to the very strong Finnish and Icelandic communities in Canada.

And in fact our historic ties with Iceland will be celebrated next week in the town of Gimli, (Manitoba), a very important town for the Icelandic world, which will be hosting the Icelandic festival of Manitoba just next week.

I would also like to extend my deepest condolences to the families and friends of the victims of the tragic air accident that took place at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport on Sunday, and wish those who were injured a speedy recovery.

I'm very pleased to be here with all of you today to discuss the common challenges that we, as Arctic countries, are confronting. This is a pretty special club for all of us to be a part of. I know that all of our countries derive a real satisfaction from our northern identity.

After all, the opening lines of the Canadian national anthem declare how proud we are to be the true north, strong and free. We are drawn to the beauty of the northern lights and the rich culture of the people who live here.

I was pleased yesterday evening to have the chance to talk with representatives of the Indigenous peoples who live in Canada's Arctic, and to hear from them the challenges they are facing and the opportunities they see because the Arctic is about more than its mystique. It has been a home for Indigenous peoples for generations upon generations and I would like to acknowledge the presence here of Monica Ell-Kanayuk, President of the Inuit Circumpolar Council Canada and Chief Bill Erasmus, International Chair of the Arctic Athabaskan Council. Thank you.

Thank you for your work and for co-developing Canada's Arctic policies, including our international Arctic policies. We look forward to continuing this work, including by funding the continued participation of Canadian Indigenous groups in the Arctic Council.

Earlier this year, Prime Minister Trudeau offered northern Inuit residents an apology for the Canadian federal government's mistreatment of them during the tuberculosis epidemics of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. In the Arctic, Canada and Indigenous people will continue to work together to confront the often painful events of our past as well as to protect our shared future.

We must all draw on the wisdom and experience of the six Indigenous Permanent Participation Organizations here today to help us build resilience to climate change to protect the north. The Arctic is warming much faster than anywhere else on the planet and the effects of climate change are being felt most acutely here, threatening the way of life for northerners as well as the health of the whole planet.

Last month, Canadian government scientists released the first part of a national assessment of the current knowledge of how Canada's climate has changed and will continue to change.

The findings are terrifying, even more so for Canada's Arctic where temperatures could increase by as much as 11 degrees Celsius by the end of the century.

We can still reduce the pace and amplitude of these changes if we take action now and that is what Canada is doing. We recognize that we cannot fix this problem alone but we know that we have a responsibility to be part of the collective solution.

As of April 1 of this year, every jurisdiction in Canada now has a price on pollution. This is a meaningful step toward reducing our national emissions but pollution knows no borders, particularly in the Arctic. And so we must all act together.

There have been some great collective achievements in the Arctic Council, notably, as Timo mentioned, rallying around a common goal to reduce emissions of black carbon. It is good news that all of the countries that report their black carbon emissions have reported a reduction.

There is great economic opportunity to be unlocked in the Arctic, but this development, including resource development, must be done in a sustainable manner.

To that end, I'm announcing today that Canada will fund a permanent secretariat of the Arctic Council Sustainable Development Working Group as one part of a broader investment of more than 28 million dollars in Arctic foreign policy.

Sustainable development is not only about environmental stewardship. It is also about ensuring that Arctic communities play a role in the economic development of this region so that it takes into account their health, cultural traditions and language and so that they benefit directly from the prosperity that economic development brings. We all saw excellent examples of this work earlier today at the working group exhibition.

Through the funding announced today, Canada will also provide more money to the University of the Arctic, the network of Northern academic institutions that provide such valuable research to all of us.

Our investments in our Arctic foreign policy are just a small part of the investments our government made in our latest budget to ensure that Arctic and northern communities continue to grow and prosper. That totals \$700 million dollars in new and focused funding over the next decade.

Our Arctic foreign policy is focused in part on people and the planet. But make no mistake; we are not naive about the geopolitical security and defense issues that are also at stake.

As with everything in the Arctic, all of these issues are interconnected. For example, unpredictable weather patterns caused by climate change are creating new security threats and are hampering our search and rescue operations.

Canada is a staunch defender of the rules-based international order and the multilateral institutions that underpin it. Since its inception in 1996, the Arctic Council has been one such institution.

Together, we have taken steps to address issues in a wide range of areas including the environment, economic development, scientific collaboration, improving mental and physical health, preserving culture and language and maintaining peace and stability. Canada very much hopes that all the countries gathered here today are as proud of our collective efforts as we are.

Finally, yesterday when I met with the Canadian Permanent Participants, they told me that it would be good to hear some of their own languages spoken at this meeting. So let me end by saying "mahsi cho" , that is in Dene and Gwich'in. "Nakurmiik," which is Inuktitut. And "quyanainni," which is in the language of the Inuit of the Western Arctic. All of these words mean thank you very much.

It's great working with all of you. This is an incredibly important organization for Canada and we're glad to be here.