

Speaking notes for Canada's national intervention
14th Meeting of the Arctic Council
Monday, May 12, 2025
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Opening:

- Thank you, Mr. Chair. Merci monsieur le président.
- In addition to the dedicated people with me in the room, we are joined online by values territorial and provincial governments.
- Canada offers our sincere congratulations and appreciation to Norway for their successful Chairship of the Arctic Council.
- You were exactly the right state, with the right people, to have in the Chair and you have steered the Council exceptionally well these past two years.

Land acknowledgement and Indigenous rights

- I am speaking to you today from the unceded, un-surrendered territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation, whose presence here reaches back to time immemorial.
- We are grateful to be on this land and respect the histories, languages, and cultures of all Indigenous Peoples who have called these ancestral lands their home.
- This inspires us in our work at the Council.
- We believe the Council's ongoing success depends a great deal on robust and meaningful engagement with the Permanent Participants.
- It most certainly encourages us to draw on Indigenous wisdom and experience to help us among other things to build resilience to climate change and to protect the north.
- It is also for this reason that we are sincere in recognizing Indigenous rights and are very clear on the importance of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Arctic Foreign Policy:

- Canada announced late last year a new Arctic Foreign Policy.
- Among the many priorities it addresses, from leadership on Arctic governance to an inclusive approach to diplomacy, a robust Arctic Council remains at the core of the Canadian approach.
- The policy allows us to deploy policy and scientific expertise and financial resources to Council activities across the working groups, including through the Global Arctic Leadership Initiative, which was recently bolstered with an additional \$1 million per year.

Canada's Arctic Council priorities:

- An ongoing priority at the Arctic Council is to maintain a focus on the human dimension by integrating social, economic and cultural development and environmental protection.
- We will also continue to advocate strongly for continued climate change action and support projects to achieve this.
- And, as we all know, setting the Arctic Council apart from other international bodies is its mandate to ensure the effective and meaningful participation of Indigenous Permanent Participants, including incorporation of Indigenous knowledge in the Council's work
- Finally, the Council's projects and programs are important in that they increase the world's understanding of the Arctic and provide Arctic Peoples and northern communities with practical knowledge and tools, to support better decision-making.

Climate and environment:

- As we all know, the Arctic is changing at a rapid and startling pace.
- Monitoring the wide range of environmental trends is key to informing our responses including our concern that the triple planetary crisis – climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss – poses a growing threat to life on Earth, and that it underscores the urgent need for action.
- We fully support the Kingdom of Denmark's ambition to give high priority to the Council's ongoing work to monitor thawing permafrost, melting sea ice, changing biodiversity and ecosystems.

Wildfires:

- Norway's focus to devote Chairship attention to the scourge of wildfires was particularly welcome and necessary.
- Peoples and communities in Northern Canada increasingly need to be ready for the growing frequency, intensity, severity and duration of wildland fires.
- These fires are impacting the environment and causing negative health and economic impacts in the north, but also in the south.
- We will continue our active participation in the Council's expanding wildfires work to enhance science and information that governments at all levels can use to more effectively address the issue.
- Lastly, we will consider the Council's good work on the issue as Canada prepares to host the G7 later this year where wildfires in a global context will be discussed.

Youth:

- Youth engagement remains a priority for Canada where we fund an array of initiatives for young Arctic and Northern Canadians to connect internationally, including support for the participation of more than 25 Arctic and Northern Canadian youth at the Norwegian Chairship's Arctic Youth Conference.
- Mental health and suicide prevention have consistently been a key priority of the Arctic Council across multiple chairships, going back as far as the last Chairship of the Kingdom of Denmark.
- Canada remains committed to advancing awareness and support for mental well-being among Arctic Youth and in Indigenous communities over the Danish chairship.

Future Arctic Council:

- Canada remains wholeheartedly and optimistically committed to the Arctic Council.
- Despite challenges, the Council's mandate is more relevant now than ever before, and Arctic States and the Indigenous Permanent Participants remain best placed to act, address, and manage the opportunities and challenges facing the region.
- And while the Council is still not able to return to business-as-usual, we appreciate the increasing positive contributions by the accredited observers to Arctic state stewardship of the region.

Conclusion:

- To conclude, Canada once again thanks Norway and we extend our full support to the Kingdom of Denmark and its Chairship program.
- We look forward to working with you, the Council's states, Permanent Participants and observers to deliver meaningful outcomes for Canada's Arctic and North and the peoples and communities across the circumpolar north.
- Thank you.