

Session 1 - In the Grip of Climate Change: Circumpolar Canada 2030

Session Theme

“Presentations and discussion were to focus on the range and cumulative effects of climate change impacts, the promise and limits of adaptation, and the role of the Canadian and circumpolar Arctic in developing and implementing national and global climate change policy. Particular interest devoted to adaptation strategies concerning wildlife and habitat; non-renewable resource development; community infrastructure; people, culture and society; and territorial, provincial, federal and international obligations.”

Session Paper Author

Dr. Rob Huebert, Centre for Military and Strategic Studies

Panel Members

Dr. Chris Burn, Professor Carleton University

Douglas Bancroft, Canadian Ice Service

Leslie Whitby, Director, Environment and Renewable Resources Directorate, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

Ed Schultz, Executive Director, Council for Yukon Indians

Summary of Session Paper - In the Grip of Climate Change - Dr. Rob Huebert

This talk is focused on the theme of transformation brought about by climate change, ecological changes, social changes, economic changes and other interrelated factors working in the region. Yet, there are also the impacts of perception to deal with.

The Arctic ice is melting, creating the prospect of Northern shipping and the image of the North as an area of new resources. Resources such as oil and gas, as well as new fisheries are emerging and have the potential to create international conflict as nation states vie for control and try to determine borders in a climate of a resource race.

While environmental conditions once kept the Canadian Arctic isolated from the international system, these new conditions have changed that and Canada must react to defend its interests and those of its Northern residents. In the future there is the potential for either great tension or great opportunity depending on how well Canada can respond to these changes.

The future of the Arctic almost certainly involves a new resource economy as the region looks to be the world's next great energy store. There have been a number of significant new exploration leases in the Canadian and American Arctic offshore areas, which point to future development. Nations such as South Korea are also developing new ice capable commercial oil and LNG vessels. The Russians are already using such means to operate their Northern oil and gas facilities and planning their expansion. In North American such developments may play a role in how gas and oil is ultimately shipped south – i.e. by pipeline along the Mackenzie Valley or via tanker.



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Along with Asian states, the European Union and others are increasingly looking at the Arctic as an area of interest. While the circumpolar states would prefer to operate within the existing legal framework, others would prefer to expand the system to give influence in the management of the Arctic to non-Arctic states.

Canada must take all this transformation into consideration and work to develop new policies that are safe and sustainable and fair.

A complete copy of the paper can be found in PDF at www.carc.org click on 2030 NORTH.

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Summary of Panel Comments – In the Grip of Climate Change

Dr. Chris Burn: Dr. Burn believes that Canada must prepare for a substantial reduction in the Arctic's sea ice. He anticipates changes in sea levels and increased permafrost melt. Canada needs to determine who will have control over managing this changing environment, the national government, Northerners or a combination of the two.

Most importantly, Northern skills will be needed to meet these future developments. Canada needs to train and develop Northern experience, similar to what is being done in other Northern states. Well-educated Canadian Northerners have been migrating south and this 'brain drain' should be slowed or stopped.

There remains also a real risk of marine disaster and environmental security is a real concern as adventure cruises increase in number. It is difficult to assess risk to the environment; however, Canada should proceed with a comprehensive risk and terrain assessment and establish a series of depots containing disaster response equipment stationed along the Northwest Passage.

Douglas Bancroft: The Northwest Passage has been navigable for the past three years thanks to falling ice levels, an unprecedented situation. The increased mobility of ice in the Canadian Archipelago has potential implications for the future safety of any shipping in the region.

Governance, resources and trade are the driving factors behind any Northern development. The Arctic Council has developed the Arctic Marine Shipping Assessment around environmental protection and infrastructure development. This development should be approached responsibly and with an emphasis on human resource development. If new shipping is to result, Canada should be able to provide the ice pilots needed and those pilots should come from the Northern communities.

Leslie Whitby: The pace of change in the North requires greater access to information to adapt. This information has to be usable and immediately accessible to individuals in the North. It should combine traditional knowledge and Western science shared between the Northern communities, the scientific community and the economists.

Ed Schultz: Mr. Schultz believes that northern resources will eventually be developed and exported and once this process is complete the Northern peoples will be abandoned. The Northern communities have been gaining experience and want to play a significant role in the discovery, use, export, sale and decommission of any such economic activity.

Most important is the investment in Northern human resources to allow Northerners to play a real role in this development. There is a limited time window available to take advantage and capitalize on all the steps in this economic cycle and Northerners must act to benefit from it.

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Recommendations from Presentation and Panel – In the Grip of Climate Change

1. The most important investment to respond to northern development opportunities is in the people, particularly youth, who can combine traditional knowledge and modern skills.

Priority must be place on the long-term goal of developing human capacity through education, training and experience in order to participate in development of resources and fill positions created by future development opportunities.
2. Environmental security is the principal security issue:
 - Environmental changes have increased access to the Arctic by other countries. Canada must defend its interests and those of it residents.
 - Proceed with a comprehensive risk assessment to establish a series of depots containing disaster response equipment stationed along the Northwest Passage.
 - Sovereignty must have an environmental dimension along with political/military.
 - Canada must prepare for a substantial reduction in Arctic sea ice.
 - Act collectively and decisively on CO2 controls (finite timelines).
3. Northerners should be at the centre of new management and policy changes:
 - Must ensure that the obligations in land claims agreements are upheld.
 - Territories should have the same rights as provinces over natural resources.
 - Northern communities must play a significant role as partners in the discovery, use, export and decommission of natural resources.
4. Canada should assume the role of an enlightened leader in cooperation with Arctic Council:
 - Canada must develop a fair, safe, secure, sustainable regime for Arctic management.
 - Strengthen the Arctic Council.
 - Consider inclusion of non-Arctic states.
5. Along with information on global changes, have to develop a wider community of knowledge, including regional models to synthesize information so that individuals and communities can use to make decisions at the local level:
 - Focus on youth who have an advantage in the information age.
 - Traditional knowledge should be used in conjunction with science.

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Recommendations from Small Group Discussions – In the Grip of Climate Change

Three questions were posed to lead the Small Group Discussion, based on the presentations, the discussions and your own experience:

1. What are the essential components of a Northern Strategy related to climate change that will guide Canada forwards to the year 2030?
2. What additional public policy issues need to be addressed for an effective Northern Strategy?
3. What specific action or policy recommendations are critical to a future northern climate change strategy, and who should take the lead in implementing them?

Recommendations

1. We need an Arctic Strategy with a clear geographic definition and both a national and international scope to protect Canadian interests and Aboriginal culture:
 - It should be flexible and adaptive since the northern environment is changing quickly, northerners should lead the policy process.
 - Combine science and traditional knowledge to support our position on the international stage.
 - Establish an advisory group with northern and government officials to inform the process.
 - Address demographic change and the implications to northern society.
 - Research should be devoted to developing new means of transportation over the changing land conditions.
 - Increase enforcement capability for our laws.
 - Keep economic benefits of development in the North.
 - Implement the ITK/ICC policy document, the “Inuit Action Plan”.
 - Expand the Ranger program.
2. There needs to be added emphasis on education. There should be a diversification of programs to include specialty training courses and preparation for dealing with the changing environment:
 - Canada must invest in education and training for northerners that are economically and culturally viable.
 - A University in the Arctic should be established.
 - There needs to be training and education for northerners to adapt to a changing environment - natural and economic.

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- Emphasis should be placed on training youth in traditional skills.
3. Strengthen the Arctic Council and re-establish a Circumpolar Ambassador:
 - The Arctic Council's mandate has to be revised and expanded to include the importance of expanded input from the non-Arctic community of nations.
 4. Develop a national environmental policy to address climate change:
 - Balance environmental protection and development and cultural values.
 - Establish an insurance liability regime, environmental protocols and emergency response preparedness measures.
 - Climate change should be seen as a human rights issue.
 - Canada must protect marine ecosystem and biodiversity.
 - Ensure that Arctic hydrocarbon development doesn't exacerbate climate change.
 - The impact of climate change on northern infrastructure has to be taken into consideration.
 - Invest more effort in Northern species preservation internationally.
 - Develop an effective oil spill response plan.
 - Ensure 'sustainability' as defined by Northern communities.
 - Focus on development of clean power sources.
 - Canada must develop its Arctic fishing policy and look into trans-border pollution prevention measures with other countries.
 5. Provide northerners with the information needed to monitor, analyse and interpret the effects of climate change for decision-making:
 - Develop regional climate models to inform the bigger picture.
 - It should be community based.
 - Weather monitoring is important.
 - See the 'Sustained Arctic Observing Network' for example.
 - Develop a useful environmental monitoring and reporting process to inform the decision making process.
 - There should be multilingual materials to inform northerners about climate change.
 - Better Internet connectivity to improve communication and education.
 6. There should be less reliance on imported processed foods:

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- There should be a Community Co-op for purchases at subsidized rates.
 - Develop local food sources to reduce dependency on processed foods from the South.
7. Canada must fully implement land claims agreements:
- Recognize land claims as the basis of any northern policy and establish a body to ensure they are carried out.
 - There should be a unified approach at the federal level for the implementation of land claim agreements.
8. Eliminate INAC and Indian Act by 2030:
- Replace DIAND mandate in the North and make it an advisory body for northern Aboriginal groups.
9. Governmental responsibilities should be clarified and carefully divided between the levels of administration:
- Pursue devolution so local communities and the territories can take on more responsibilities for their own governance.
 - There should be royalty sharing when large-scale economic development comes.
 - Horizontal coordination should be improved in Ottawa to streamline governance and make federal/territorial relations smoother.
 - There should be a Cabinet Committee on the North.
10. There needs to be a comprehensive policy for a navigable Arctic: an international regulatory regime should be considered:
- Ensure that Canada has the capability to monitor and manage northern marine traffic.
 - There should be Inuit pilots on ships.
 - Improve hydrographical charts.
 - The Navy should acquire an ice strengthened nuclear powered carrier.