

Session 5: Canada's North – A New Strategy

Session Theme

“An important outcome of the conference will be a renewal and expansion of the Northern dimension to Canada’s foreign policy. Co-operation between the eight Arctic states and Arctic Indigenous Peoples has been achieved through the Arctic Council, but what is this “high level forum” accomplishing? The conference will examine the meanings of “national interest” and “sovereignty” in the circumpolar world, the role of global conventions in a Northern context, and the pros and cons of a legally binding Arctic Ocean treaty between the Arctic states. Is compliance with existing treaties enough? What should a roadmap to 2030 look like?”

Session Paper Author

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Panel Members

George Braden, Braden & Associates, Ottawa, and former Premier of the Northwest Territories

Jim Lahey, Assistant Deputy Minister, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (retired)

Udloriak Hanson, Senior Policy Liaison, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.

John Noble, retired Canadian Ambassador to Greece and Switzerland

Summary of Session Paper

Canada's North - A New Strategy Dr. Franklyn Griffiths

There is a difference between the North and the Arctic and they should be treated differently in policy. Focusing on the Arctic is the best way to energize Canadians about Canada's North. We have no strategy for the Arctic as a region even though the significance of the region is increasing. For the Arctic, a top-down government approach is being presented. The PM should take personal responsibility for the new Arctic strategy and appoint a Secretary of State for the Arctic, with the strategy run out of the PMO.

First, we must steer the Arctic in the direction of greater international cooperation, and avoid the conflict-based scenario. Second, cooperative stewardship is what we are trying to accomplish, rather than sovereignty. Stewardship implies locally informed governance, on site. Aboriginal people are essential to stewardship, which is part of an ethical approach to the Arctic. This is the best defence of sovereignty. Yet, the region as a whole is not set up for cooperative stewardship; it is a series of sub-regions with different perspectives. The Arctic Council has no regulatory authority to make Arctic arrangements spanning the region.



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Canada has to convince others to cooperate. There is no future for an overarching Arctic treaty – the Arctic states are not ready or willing (especially Russia). This assumes time which we may not have before changes require a totally new set of responses.

Objectives for the strategy that will create the conditions for cooperation are:

- Elevation of the Arctic agenda.
- Engagement of the South.
- Invigoration of Arctic governance (the Arctic Council).

Initiatives to be taken under the strategy include:

- Enlargement of the Arctic Council to include non-Arctic states as speaking members (this is key to the approach).
- Elicit US interest in an agreement on basic principles with Russia.
- Expand bilateral cooperation agreements with the United States for joint planning in the region's future generally and a joint project for ecosystem management in the Beaufort Sea region.

The Arctic Council needs to be a venue where an overarching perspective on the region is developed and various stewardship projects are coordinated with the active participation of indigenous people. The Arctic Eight should control funding which can be used to build capacity for the participating indigenous groups.

A Marine Council should be considered as a venue for the creation of a new joint marine coordinating committee.

Recommendations from the Presenter

Dr. Griffiths gave specific recommendations to initiate under the authority of the office of the Prime Minister of Canada.

1. The Prime Minister (PM) must take the lead in developing a new strategy for Canada's north and:
 - initiate development of a domestic political strategy to transmute Canadian public interest in climate protection and Arctic sovereignty into support for pan-Arctic stewardship.
 - dispatch emissaries on a tour of Arctic and certain non-Arctic capitals to report on the outlook for and likely first steps in a strategy of cooperative stewardship.
 - demonstrate personal commitment, create opportunity for personal learning, and to generate new knowledge of regional commonalities and visions for the future, all by convening an international Arctic Identity Network or brains trust from the Eight.

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- assign a senior official in the PMO (PMO-A) and requisite staff with responsibility for policy planning and the machinery-of-government dimensions of a Canadian Arctic strategy.
 - appoint a Secretary of State (SS-A) in DFAIT responsible for international networking and representation together with domestic stakeholder consultations, all with an eye to Canadian chairmanship of the Arctic Council in 2013-2015 and enduring Arctic leadership in following years.
 - lead Canadians in laying concern for the Northwest Passage to rest by making clear the situation that exists on the issue, undertaking unilaterally to strengthen the Canada-U.S. agreement to disagree on the Passage by governing Canada's internal Arctic waters as though they were an international strait, and by initiating a new national project, analogous to international peacekeeping, for cooperative stewardship in the Arctic.
 - when appropriate in the larger context of Canada-U.S. relations, seek interest of U.S. President in an Agreement on Basic Principles of Arctic International Relations as a means to improved relations with the Russian Federation together with effective Arctic governance.
2. The senior official in the PMO (PMO-A) and requisite staff charged the with responsibility for policy planning and the machinery-of-government dimensions of a Canadian Arctic strategy should:
- in conjunction with INAC and evolution of the Northern Strategy, to lead in Canada's pan-Arctic strategy planning, sequencing of initiatives, and instructions to SS-A including on stakeholder consultations.
 - be responsible for design of and federal interdepartmental participation in a new north south Canadian consultative forum on pan-Arctic affairs patterned on the provision for a Marine Council in the Nunavut Land Claim Agreement.
 - join with appropriate others in discussion and ensuing action to constitute a Standing Committee on the Arctic in the House of Commons.
 - With the Secretary of State for the Arctic launch Canadian effort for Arctic Council enlargement with non-Arctic consultative parties and the creation of an Arctic Fund.
3. The Secretary of State for the Arctic (SS-A) in DFAIT would network at the international level and through domestic stakeholder consultations to establish the role and support for Canada as Chair of the Arctic Council from 2013-2015 and the basis for Canadian leadership in following years. Specifically:
- in dialogue with counterparts, to lay the basis for Arctic-derived trade, security, climate change, and other initiatives by the PM in encounters with other heads of state, most notably U.S., Chinese, and German.
 - chair a Marine Council equivalent to the Arctic Council to establish an international co-operative approach for Arctic oceans management.

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- the potential of a renewed Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe evokes a greater commitment to cooperative stewardship from the Russian Federation.
- ensure Arctic Fund support for Arctic Council permanent participant capacity building, and to seek a direct say for permanent participants in the Council's consensus on matters of existential significance to indigenous peoples.
- deliver maximal Canadian support for U.S. global negotiating positions on missile defence, weapons in space, and ASAT prohibition as they relate to the Arctic.
- seek the establishment of a bi-national Canada-U.S. panel on opportunities for cooperative stewardship in the Arctic.
- seek U.S. agreement to lead a joint search and rescue exercise at the North Pole with icebreakers from the Arctic and interested non-Arctic states.
- pursue, initially with U.S. counterparts, the development of an integrated sub-regional approach to the management of the Arctic waters of North America.
- in conjunction with the Government of Nunavut, to widen and deepen Canada's relations with Greenland with Danish support.
- obtain Energy, Mines and Resources Canada commitment to the development of Sverdrup Basin natural gas for LNG export to European and Asian markets.
- consult with counterparts in Berlin and Brussels on access to high Arctic natural gas, on Arctic Council enlargement, climate change, and European security.
- consult with Chinese counterparts on high Arctic LNG, Arctic Council enlargement, Arctic marine transportation, and Canada-China trade relations.
- consult with Norwegian counterpart on a trilateral Canadian-Chinese-Norwegian working group to prepare recommendations on regional trade expansion and industrial cooperation for presentation to the Arctic Council.
- consult with Swedish counterpart on transition and a possible pre-negotiation of Canadian items prior to Canadian assumption of the Arctic Council chair.

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 – Canada’s North A New Strategy

John Noble: Mr. Noble emphasized cooperation with the United States, reviewing the actions of the Mulroney government after the voyage of the Manhattan and the 1987 Agreement to Conserve Porcupine Caribou Herd.

Climate change is not just a northern issue. It is necessary to get buy in from southern Canada on the basis of mutual benefit.

Commenting on some of Dr. Griffiths’ recommendations, he does not believe that the PMO is the place to assign Arctic policy; that office does not have the time. A Secretary of State for the Arctic might be possible but their responsibilities must be limited. The proposal for enlarging the Arctic Council needs to be assessed in terms of “what’s in it for Canada.”

A new Arctic Treaty is not needed, we already have the appropriate international mechanisms for Arctic governance.

George Braden: Mr. Braden presented nine points in commenting on Dr. Griffiths’ paper.

- He does not think military conflict will occur.
- We should be cautious about the hype over northern resource development.
- The private sector should be more involved. Governments can’t afford all the infrastructure costs which would be carried by private investment.
- Aboriginal people must be involved and northerners must have control over resources
- The North needs to have a northern-based capitalist class, a group of businesses with money or borrowing power to develop the area. Otherwise multinationals will dominate regional resources with minimal local benefit.
- The Arctic Council should be protected and enhanced.
- There is a need to fine tune and focus northern governance objectives.
- Canada requires a circumpolar affairs ambassador.
- The new strategy must be more than a communications piece. It must possess substance, realizing that we can’t satisfy everyone.

Udloriak Hanson: Ms. Hanson suggested that the next conference on the North should be held in the North

Dr. Griffiths’ recommendations for an Arctic strategy focus on foreign policy elements. A new strategy for the North should encompass all the areas covered in this conference, including ties to our culture, land and language. If Northerners are to understand why this strategy is important we need a plain language approach. In addition to stewardship and sovereignty, we also need sustainability. Communities should be involved in any strategy.

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Ms. Hanson stated that the Inuit have used areas along the Northwest Passage, as documented in the Land Use and Occupancy Study. This is an important contributor to Canadian sovereignty.

Modern treaties include provisions that address foreign policy. The Nunavut agreement is one of these. The Inuit must be consulted when undertaking international negotiations that will affect the region and its people. Canada needs an arctic foreign policy that defines goals, objectives, priorities and timetables for the region.

Ms. Hanson spoke to the importance of capacity building and education in the North. This is important in Ottawa as well, where more northern specialists are required to work in public policy to reflect the circumstances of the North.

Jim Lahey: Mr. Lahey believes that we need to determine our interests before moving into the realm of treaty making and policy formation. Our interests are: possession, wellbeing and wealth

1. Possession: The issues are water and seabed, and we need to optimize our claims. The issue for us is can we regulate passage effectively: so far the means we have taken are insufficient
2. Wellbeing: There are four parts to wellbeing.
 - Quality of Life: The standard of living in the North is actually fairly good. Although there are problems of housing and suicide, the issue is sustainability, and education is the key to this.
 - Cultural affirmation and respect
 - Sound governance is the foundation for wellbeing. The role of aboriginal people is established, however there is a danger of over-governance.
 - Climate change, which is primarily an issue of adaptation
3. Wealth: Exploiting non-renewable wealth will require huge capital investment and risk. Our current ambivalence could end up in not proceeding yet this is the only real prospect for financial independence.

Mr. Lahey was in favour of Dr. Griffiths' points, and noted that we will not likely be able to regulate the Northwest Passage on our own, the capital required for development is beyond our resources, and climate change must be addressed jointly. Conversely, for the Arctic Council we have to proceed cautiously in becoming more entangled with others, as we may compromise on our possession and freedom to act. We have to weigh what is to be gained and lost in ceding greater control to other countries. There is a lot of work for us to do with our current partners. The time has come to move on to the second stage of discussions about a northern strategy by focusing more explicitly on making choices.

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Recommendations from the Panel – Canada’s North A New Strategy

1. The private sector should be more involved. Governments can’t afford all the infrastructure costs that could be carried by private investment.
2. Aboriginal people must be involved and northerners must have control over resources
3. The Arctic Council should be protected and enhanced.
4. Canada requires a circumpolar affairs ambassador.
5. The next conference on a northern strategy should be held in the North
6. A new strategy for the North should:
 - encompass all the areas covered in this conference, including ties to our culture, land and language.
 - Adopt a plain language approach
 - Include sustainability
 - involve northern communities
7. Traditional use by Inuit of areas along the Northwest Passage should be recognized an important contributor to Canadian sovereignty.
8. Capacity building is required in the North, as well as in Ottawa, where more northern specialists are required to work on public policy.
9. We need to determine our interests in relation to a northern strategy before moving into the realm of treaty making and policy formation.
10. Climate change must be addressed jointly with international partners.
11. We should proceed cautiously in expanding the Arctic Council
12. We should move on to the second stage of discussions about a northern strategy by focusing more explicitly on making necessary choices.

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Recommendations From Small Group Discussions – Canada’s North A New Strategy

1. Principles for a Northern Strategy

The northern strategy should:

- be ‘Canada First’ with focus on Canadian priorities and interests.
- be fluid, as the North will change.
- Be based on stewardship that is logically informed with buy-in from indigenous peoples.
- Use the UN, IMO and other appropriate agencies to regulate relevant issues.
- be a human centred strategy taking into consideration Inuit usage of the land and waters.
- be achievable rather than simply idealistic; cost is a serious issue.
- ensure that the domestic policy reinforces our international position.
- Include public education to ensure knowledge from the South about Northern affairs.
- Be defined by both national and international interests: defining those interests at the outset is widely recognized to be very important.
- ensure enforcement and monitoring capability, for example, the detection and regulation of shipping is a widely acknowledged priority.
- Require full implementation of land claim agreements
- Include a Northern science policy as a fundamental component.
- support existing scientific and social/educational networks.
- be accessible-published in plain language and in other languages as required.

2. Policy Guidelines

Guidelines for pursuing a northern strategy:

- Any policy should include attention to local health care, education, and infrastructure.
- Development should be sustainable (both economic and environmental)
- The development of multiple strategies in different government departments must be avoided
- There should be incentives for sustainable or green development
- There must also be improved digital infrastructure, for example, to enable distance education and medical diagnosis

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- Permafrost change research must be improved as the environment changes.
 - A strategy must develop larger DFAIT component into documents that are complimentary to LCAs.
 - The importance of the North should be communicated to Southern Canadians, and the presence of the North in media and public consciousness should be increased
 - The North should be included in Southern school curricula.
 - Collaboration with industry must be improved.
 - The issue of destination travel over the Northwest Passage should be examined with the possible impact on use of North-South travel along the Mackenzie River.
 - Any policy must be transparent.
 - Environmental regulations must be firmed up and must be able to adapt with changing development scenarios.
 - Canada should find issues to take the lead on simply for the optics of leading.
3. Specific Recommendations for a Northern Strategy
- Strategy development should start now with bi-lateral agreements rather than trying to start with a grand policy
 - Appoint an apolitical ambassador for the North within the government to hold the government accountable for its policies.
 - Include devolution and resource sharing in the strategy.
 - Develop a post-oil world plan for Arctic development.
 - Improve and expand Northern colleges.
 - Organize exchanges with southern schools and programs for young leaders visiting the North.
 - Develop a northern “think tank” style institution for policy advice and develop new capabilities.
 - Strengthen the Canada-US bilateral relationship.
 - Adopt a precautionary principal with regards to environmental regulation.
 - Legislate and fund NORDREG to make it mandatory.
 - Institute a new high-level government position to coordinate Northern Policy.
 - Increase spending on Arctic infrastructure, including Arctic research stations.
 - Canadian domestic policy should be a launching point for our international Arctic policy.

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- Host high-level meetings in the North.
- Define the scope of the policy very clearly and determine the responsibilities and areas of interest of each stakeholder: all levels of government should be involved and NGOs and other stakeholders must be included.
- For maritime enforcement in the North, follow southern procedures and leave enforcement with the Coast Guard rather than the Navy.
- Look to the West Coast as an example of regulating foreign maritime traffic through a Canadian archipelago.