

PREFACE

As Canada's minister of foreign affairs, I share with many Canadians a profound interest in our national history, especially in the events and developments that have shaped Canada's place in the world. I am, therefore, honoured to present this special volume in the department's flagship historical series, *Documents on Canadian External Relations*.

The first volume of *Documents on Canadian External Relations* was published in 1967, as Canada celebrated its first century of nationhood. Since then, volumes in this series have dealt with various periods in the history of Canadian foreign policy, from the Laurier era up to the Pearson years in government. The series currently includes 29 regular volumes and has reprinted over 20,000 documents, totalling almost 40,000 pages of text, making it the largest historical documentary project in Canada.

The subject of this special volume, the Arctic, has an ever-growing importance for Canada as we approach our federation's 150th anniversary. This volume illuminates how and why Canada asserted its sovereignty over the Far North between 1874 and 1949, and it demonstrates how much Canadians today owe to the nation builders of the past.

Successive governments from the late nineteenth century onward worked to secure the country's northern heritage. Much of the story behind the successful actions taken by Canadian politicians, diplomats and public servants has remained buried in the archives until now. This story is of great historical interest in its own right, but it has additional value today as Canadians face new challenges in their North.

A full knowledge of our northern history can both inform and inspire us. On the eve of Canada's 150th anniversary, I commend this volume as a vital starting point in this important journey of national discovery.

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