

Our government's response to the joint parliamentary review of international relations focussed on four broad themes of a "comprehensive northern foreign policy". These themes are:

- * affirming Canadian sovereignty
- * modernizing Canada's northern defences
- * preparing for the commercial use of the Northwest Passage, and
- * promoting enhanced circumpolar cooperation.

The overwhelming Canadian challenge is geography, a vast, unique realm of land and water and ice.

The waters within the Arctic archipelago are not like warm waters which are used for international navigation. Our waters are in fact frozen most of the year - navigation as on the high seas is impossible. The shoreline is where open water meets solid ice, not where water meets land.

Indeed, Canadian Inuit live on this ice for part of the year: for them it is home. So whether terra firma or aqua firma Canada claims sovereignty over this entire area. In 1985 our government established straight baselines around the perimeter of the Arctic archipelago. This defines the outer limits of Canada's historic internal waters.

To open our Arctic waters we are building the world's largest icebreaker - a class 8 vessel. That ship will be used to keep open waterways and ports that are now closed part of the year. It will facilitate commerce and the development of our Northern resource potential.

We are improving the entire infrastructure that is needed for the control and development of the North. We are developing the means to provide basic information on weather, tides, currents, and ice conditions. We are developing aids to navigation and communications. We are developing aids to shipping, development and the protection of the environment. We are discussing with the United States an agreement whereby they would acknowledge the need to seek Canadian consent prior to passage by an American icebreaker through Canadian northern waters. Major efforts to protect the northern environment go back to 1970 when we passed the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act.

All of these measures are essential for safe navigation in the Arctic. They are consistent with the Government's pledge to facilitate shipping in our internal archipelagic waters subject to our sovereignty, security and environmental requirements and the welfare of the inhabitants of the North.