

It is also through this emphasis on the human side of the Arctic that the government has come to put a priority on the state of the Arctic environment. Problems like climate change, Arctic haze, ozone depletion and toxic accumulation are not unique to the Arctic, but there is growing evidence that they may be affecting the Arctic more severely than other regions. None of these problems can be addressed adequately by national means alone -- they are international concerns that demand the cooperation of many Arctic and non-Arctic countries. But a brief glance at the map shows the key role Canada and the Soviet Union must play in any international efforts to protect the Arctic from ecological damage. It is we who must show leadership. It is we who must work together closely just to get the rest of the world to take proper notice. I truly hope this conference will discover new, imaginative ways in which our two countries can cooperate both to understand and to cope with these troubling and alarming challenges.

Canada is concerned about all environmental threats to the Arctic. But I would like to take a moment to highlight the issue of toxic accumulations in the Arctic food chain. Governments are sometimes accused by the cynical of adopting a posture of alarm for reasons of image, or to increase their popularity. Let me assure you all of the very real consternation and concern the Canadian government feels about the disturbingly high incidences of PCB's and other organic compounds in the blood of native children and the milk of native mothers in the Arctic. Recent studies show an average consumption of more than the recommended tolerable limits of organic contaminants daily in some communities. We know the sources of some of these contaminants are international, but we know little else at this time. We are determined to understand this problem better and to find some way of reassuring our obviously distressed Northern native peoples, but we require help. This is one of the reasons we supported the Finnish initiative from the outset. We hope our friends in the Soviet Union will help us to comprehend and address this problem better, just as we stand ready to respond to comparable requests from them.

I would like now to say a few words about the question of arms control and other strategic issues. We are pleased that Canadians and Soviets concerned about international tensions are meeting to consider the strategic significance of the Arctic and its relationship to world peace. But I must tell you that Canada sees a limited scope for isolating these matters in an Arctic or any other regional context, especially at the time when the prospect of progress in global fora seems so promising. For just as Arctic experts are fond of reminding us how a mercator projection distorts the Arctic and conceals many Circumpolar unities, so we must not forget how a Circumpolar projection