



CANADA AND THE ARCTIC

On October 20, 1994, Canada appointed its first Ambassador for Circumpolar Affairs. Ambassador Mary Simon will represent Canada at international meetings on circumpolar issues and consult with interested Canadians, particularly northern governments and Aboriginal groups, on such issues. The Ambassador will also be responsible for co-ordinating federal efforts on circumpolar issues, including:

- Canada's participation in the eight-nation Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy (AEPS);
- the implementation of a Canadian proposal to create an Arctic Council composed of Canada, the United States, Russia, Iceland, Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark, plus indigenous peoples' representatives; and
- Canada's policy with respect to Antarctica.

This appointment fulfils a Government commitment made during the last federal election campaign. It and the proposed creation of an Arctic Council are two key instruments for the more effective promotion of both Arctic and broader foreign policy objectives.

The Arctic faces complex and interdependent legal, political, developmental, environmental, scientific and cultural challenges; to address these successfully requires multilateral policy co-ordination and action. Canada's national unity and principal foreign policy objectives of good governance, sustainable development and respect for human rights all find their reflection in the Arctic.

Canada's current international co-operation on the Arctic is both multilateral and bilateral. Multilaterally, the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy was adopted in 1991 by the eight Arctic countries to strengthen co-ordination of existing national Arctic environmental protection policies and programs. Canada will host the next AEPS Ministerial meeting in 1995. Canadian priorities include stronger institutionalization of the AEPS and faster progress on the issues of protection of the Arctic marine environment and indigenous knowledge.

Bilaterally, in 1992 Canada and Russia concluded an Agreement on Co-operation in the Arctic and the North. New priorities have been added to geology, construction, environment, health, socio-cultural and Aboriginal activities dating from the 1960s; these include economic relations between the northern regions and direct contacts between regional and local governments and Aboriginal peoples.

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