

I would like to address the question of Canadian sovereignty, what it is, whether it is threatened, what the government is doing to defend and strengthen it. In particular, I want to talk about the North, where our sovereignty has been an issue.

Let me begin with a definition. Sovereignty is a concept of law. It is the legal condition necessary for the inclusion of particular lands and waters within the boundaries of a particular independent country. It is a matter of who is in charge.

Canada has no real problems with sovereignty over our land. All the land, including islands, that Canada claims is recognized internationally as Canadian. There are some questions of where borders run but that is a problem common to most nations, a problem of frontiers, not sovereignty.

But Canadian sovereignty has been questioned regarding some waters in our North. Canada views as internal the waters that lie between the islands of the Arctic archipelago, and between those islands and the mainland. Some of those waters are known as the Northwest Passage.

Throughout our mandate we have received much advice on how to defend and buttress sovereignty in the North. It has come from the Parliamentary Committee that we asked to review our foreign policy. It has come from Canadians from coast to coast, in letters, submissions and conversations. It has come in useful studies such as the one on The North and Canada's International Relations that was published earlier this year by the Canadian Institute of International Affairs. That is a piece of a work which I would recommend to anyone with an interest in our North. We thank these parliamentarians and these citizens because much of that advice has been useful. Much of it has, in fact, been adopted.

Let me review what this government has done in the North and more specifically what we have done to reinforce our sovereignty in the North. The two issues are linked because the resolution of any competing claims will come in time through negotiations and international law. Our case will be reinforced by the steps we are taking to demonstrate Canadian activity, Canadian presence and Canadian control. Canada's claim will be judged by the actual things we have done to demonstrate use and control of our own North. There are six significant steps we have taken to strengthen Canada's sovereign claim to the lands and waters of our North.

-- On September 10, 1985, we drew straight baselines around our Arctic islands confirming that the waters between them, and between them and the mainland, are internal.