

more far-reaching agreement on Arctic cooperation when Prime Minister Mulroney visits the Soviet Union next month. The Polar Ski Trek by a team of Soviet and Canadian skiers two years ago was not only a magnificent triumph of human strength and spirit, it brought home our geographical proximity and common Arctic heritage to millions of Canadian and Soviet citizens. The Arctic indigenous peoples of both countries are forging new, culturally deep links, most notably through the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, which hosted Inuit from all the Circumpolar countries for the first time in Greenland last summer. And what could be a more natural avenue for Canadian-Soviet cooperation than that now occurring between the Canadian Marine Transport Group and Minmorflot, the Soviet Ministry of Merchant Marine, in a multi-faceted project involving ship design, remote sensing and shipping in Arctic waters.

The Canadian Government supports all these accomplishments strongly and is proud to have assisted them in some measure. In 1987, the government adopted an official policy of promoting Circumpolar cooperation and we continue to pursue bilateral and multilateral opportunities to strengthen our Arctic-focussed relations with Circumpolar neighbours. We are working on several fronts to assist Canadians, particularly Northerners, and other Canadian governments in pursuing their interest in the international north. As Canada's largest Arctic neighbour, the Soviet Union is naturally seen by Canadians as offering numerous possibilities for mutually beneficial cooperation. We were, therefore, particularly pleased to hear President Gorbachev call for greater cooperation among the Arctic countries in his 1987 speech in Murmansk. Canada remains ready to respond to that call. I am sure Prime Minister Mulroney will be eager to explore new bilateral avenues during his visit, particularly those touching the troublesome questions of Global and Arctic environmental degradation.

This conference is emphasizing bilateral cooperation. However, I must mention the efforts of the eight Arctic countries to create an International Arctic Science Committee and to address the protection of the Arctic environment within the Finnish initiative. Canada supports both these initiatives strongly. We were particularly encouraged by the outcome of last month's meeting in Rovaniemi, Finland. There, the Arctic countries agreed upon a work programme that will lead, we hope, to collective efforts to deal with serious threats to the Arctic environment like toxic accumulations, acid rain, Arctic haze climate change and marine pollution. As with bilateral Circumpolar cooperation, Canada views efforts to expand multilateral cooperation among the Arctic countries with favour.