

No country, except possibly Russia, has more at stake in the far-sighted management of circumpolar relations than Canada. A sense of northernness has long been central to the Canadian identity, but the North has historically played a relatively small and episodic part in Canadian foreign policy. A clearly defined Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy will establish a framework to promote the extension of Canadian interests and values, and will renew the government's commitment to co-operation with our own northern peoples and with our circumpolar neighbours to address shared issues and responsibilities. It will demonstrate that our future security and prosperity are closely linked with our ability to manage complex northern issues. A proactive approach in strengthening Arctic circumpolar relations, drawing on Canada's experiences, traditions and capabilities, in both the domestic and international context, will help to shape the nature and thrust of circumpolar affairs, and Canada's central place therein.

The Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy is framed by three principles — meeting our commitments and taking a leadership role; establishing partnerships within and beyond government; and engaging in ongoing dialogue with Canadians, especially northerners. In keeping with this framework, the Northern Dimension of Canada's Foreign Policy will have four overarching objectives:

1. to enhance the security and prosperity of Canadians, especially northerners and Aboriginal peoples;
2. to assert and ensure the preservation of Canada's sovereignty in the North;
3. to establish the Circumpolar region as a vibrant geopolitical entity integrated into a rules-based international system; and
4. to promote the human security of northerners and the sustainable development of the Arctic.

These objectives will be pursued through a focus on four priority areas for action over the next several years:

- Strengthening and promoting a central place in circumpolar relations and policy co-ordination for the Arctic Council, which is the only forum in which the eight Arctic states and Indigenous northern peoples as Permanent Participants come together to discuss and decide on matters of common interest. The Arctic Council is uniquely placed to address the environmental challenges faced in the circumpolar region, and has the potential to enhance opportunities for capacity building, trade and economic development, as well as educational opportunities and employment mobility for Canadian youth and children in the circumpolar North.

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