

Introduction

From October 3-5, 1997, fourteen Arctic specialists¹ met in Calgary to review the Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade titled, *Canada And The Circumpolar World: Meeting The Challenges Of Cooperation Into The Twenty-First Century*. Hosted by the Canadian Arctic Resources Committee and supported by the Walter and Duncan Gordon Charitable Foundation, the Calgary Working Group (CWG) assessed the report and identified a number of further initiatives that it believes would serve Canada's circumpolar Arctic interests and foreign policy for the region.

The CWG applauds the Standing Committee for the breadth and depth of its report. The report identifies important policy needs and its many recommendations are, on balance, constructive and forward looking. As the Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee notes in his "Forward", issues concerning indigenous peoples, environment, and economies have been addressed previously, but, "largely from a domestic perspective". Given the effects of human activities in distant regions on the Arctic, its people, and their shared traditions and visions, it is timely to pursue efforts to focus attention on Canada's foreign policies for the circumpolar Arctic. The CWG believes that the report of the Standing Committee can be an effective tool in promoting public discussion on Canada's obligations and opportunities in the Arctic. In making its own views public, the CWG hopes to stimulate a national discourse on Canada roles in the future of the circumpolar Arctic.

In spite of the many strengths of the report and its good intentions, it could have spoken more forcefully to the need to improve our ability, in both domestic and international policy spheres, to imagine, to design, and to act as a society that is uniquely northern and to do so with coherence, reciprocity, mutual respect, and a sense of self-reliance rooted in interdependence. It is time to create a vibrant and meaningful sense of "connectedness" amongst all those for whom the Arctic/North is important. Connections give rise to consciousness, identity, and shared experiences, all essential in charting purpose, policy and practice. There are clear signs of strengthening north-to-north connections within Canada and between northern Canadians and our circumpolar neighbours. There are fewer signs of novel north-south linkages - not the centre-periphery or the metropolis-hinterland traditions - but new relations focused on our northerness, on new models of governance, and on shared values and the innovative opportunities that await. A wider consciousness is needed in which northern institutions and organizations, especially those of Aboriginal societies and public governments, exert an upward and outward reaching momentum. The combination of

¹ A list of the members of the CWG is found in Appendix 1 of this report.