

work. Equally important, when the case is ready, not only should the Minister invite the U.S. to lead a working group, but the argument should be brought to Wirth's personal attention through the use of intermediaries such as Maurice Strong. E.F. Roots, Science Advisor Emeritus for Environment Canada, could provide invaluable assistance to those in DFAIT charged with putting the case together.

*Arctic marine transportation.* This is an up and coming issue as the Russian Federation moves to exploit its Arctic offshore oil and natural gas reserves and is faced with continued deterioration of its pipeline system. Norway, Russia, and also Japan have financed a multi-million dollar programme of research into the intensified use of the Northern Sea Route for bulk transportation between Europe and Asia, and from the Russian Arctic to western markets. Chernomyrdin has expressed interest in the Arctic Council as a forum for international cooperation and support of new ventures in this area. For its part, the Greenland HRG has granted offshore oil exploration permits in concessions west of Nuuk and in Jamison Land and adjacent waters, all with an eye to eventual transportation by marine mode. Economics and politics may also conspire one day to open the way for U.S. offshore oil shipments westwards from the Beaufort Sea. Meanwhile, PAME is actively concerned with Arctic shipping developments, and Transport Canada has been leading IMO-sponsored talks on the harmonization of Arctic ship rules with a special regard for environmental protection.

The Arctic Council clearly has a pro-active role to play here. The role is both to ensure that precedents set in the evolution of marine transportation in one or more subregions of the circumpolar North are consistent with the wider requirements of sustainable development at the regional level, and to facilitate the coordination of national assets to assist the Russian Federation in particular as it puts together the necessary infrastructure, environmental and social impact assessment included, for safe bulk transport by marine mode. Norway and Russia could therefore be approached to co-chair an Arctic Council working group on marine transportation. John Karau, who is with Environment Canada and heads the PAME effort, could be of particular assistance as DFAIT starts to flesh out a proposal in this area.

*Abatement of Arctic food contamination.* The Canadian Polar Commission has recently identified human health threats resulting from long-range transport of pollutants as the prime issue in Canada's North. AMAP has progressed to the point where a region-wide assessment of food contamination is within reach. The time is ripe for the Arctic states and permanent participants in the Council to start building a two-pronged long-term abatement strategy. On the one hand, there is the need for coordinated health risk assessment and mitigation on a region-wide basis. Health risks to children in particular could well provide an initial point of departure as for example in regard to genetic damage, birth defects, and behavioural disorders. Secondly, a long-term science and communications strategy will have to be devised to address the problem at source by tracing pollutant origins and raising global awareness of the special vulnerability of the Arctic as a geophysical repository for pollution generated by world-wide practices of unsustainable development.