

TOWARD A NORTHERN FOREIGN POLICY FOR CANADA

A CONSULTATION PAPER

FOREWORD BY THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

I am pleased to present this consultation paper, entitled *Toward A Northern Foreign Policy for Canada*, which for the first time places the essential elements of Canadian policy for the domestic and circumpolar north within a comprehensive, flexible foreign policy framework.

The Government recognizes that a northern foreign policy can be sustained and properly supported in political and resource terms only if it emanates from and resonates with core Canadian values and long-term national objectives that are not subject to being overtaken by events or made irrelevant by external developments. This consultation paper sets out 33 core objectives arranged under seven major themes. Taken together, these provide a coherent policy framework to help guide Canada in choosing the specific goals and action plans it will adopt for the circumpolar Arctic.

In the past, Canada's dealings with the circumpolar north tended to be episodic. It could even be said that Canada has not had a comprehensive northern foreign policy in the sense of a considered, coherent, clearly articulated set of objectives. The new northern foreign policy framework presented here is a long-overdue step forward in focussing attention on this important area. Why, though, is a northern foreign policy needed *now* in particular? The answer lies in the convergence of significant developments in both the Canadian north and the international Arctic.

At home, Canada is entering a new phase in its approach to the north and to Canada's Aboriginal peoples generally. This is reflected in many developments, including the Government's response to the Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Gathering Strength*, released under the Honourable Jane Stewart, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, and the Honourable Ralph Goodale, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians; the ongoing settlement of land claims and the conclusion of self-government agreements; the constitutional renewal and division creating a new northern territory of Nunavut from the existing Northwest Territories, accompanied by the continuing political evolution of the western Arctic; and the continuing devolution of administration and control of public lands and resources from the federal government to the Yukon Territorial Government.

All of these domestic developments point to a renewal of relations between northern and southern Canada. They also reflect a greater focus in the north itself on self-reliance and sustainable development. Together, they indicate the need to harness all available means, including foreign policy, to the achievement of the full array of Canadian domestic, and especially northern, interests. Finally, both northern and southern Canadians with an interest in northern affairs are calling for an active role in the formulation of foreign policy relating to the