

Arctic Council, it will be important for Canada to help ensure that Arctic issues achieve and retain a higher profile in U.S. foreign policy.

### **Strong Canada–Russia Co-operation on Arctic Issues**

For nearly 15 years, Canada has actively pursued bilateral co-operation with Russia focussing on the north. While working together on a wide range of Arctic issues through the Arctic Council, Canada and Russia have also maintained their bilateral northern co-operation and, where possible, strengthened it. Canada has proposed a Canada–Russia Working Group on the Arctic and the north, to be co-chaired by the two countries' foreign ministers. New attention is being paid to Aboriginal and northern development. Innovative economic co-operation, such as the "Arctic Bridge" project, is being promoted. Nearly a third of Canada's bilateral technical assistance budget for Russia has been devoted to northern and Aboriginal projects. Overall, Canada has a major interest in doing all it can, including through its northern foreign policy, to bolster Russia's political stability, economic renewal, democratic development and constructive international stance.

### **Strong Canada–Nordic Co-operation on Arctic Issues**

Canada enjoys excellent relations with all of its Nordic neighbours, and is actively broadening those relations through new investment, trade, education, culture and tourism programs. It also, of course, employs bilateral channels wherever suitable to advance various mutual interests in circumpolar affairs. In this regard, a broad Canadian objective is to ensure that the membership of four of the Nordic countries in the European Union (EU) and of Canada in the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and Norway's growing engagement with Russia, do not over time diminish Canadian–Nordic co-operation. Canada also has special Arctic-related objectives it seeks to advance through relations with individual Nordic countries, such as co-operation in combatting barriers to the trade in furs. Close bilateral relations with its Nordic neighbours will be an important element of Canada's northern foreign policy.

## **THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS AND NATIONAL UNITY**

Canada's northern foreign policy framework includes an open-ended commitment to consultation with key Canadian stakeholders, pointing to the following core objectives.

### **Meaningful Northern Participation in Formulating Canada's Northern Foreign Policy**

The Arctic is the homeland of Canada's northern Indigenous peoples. They and the many non-Aboriginal peoples who have made the north their home clearly have the most direct stake in Canada's northern foreign policy. These facts underlie the involvement of northerners in Canada's own delegation to the Arctic Council, the appointment of a northerner as the first Ambassador for Circumpolar Affairs, and the unprecedented number of consultations held with northern Aboriginal organizations, the territorial governments and other concerned Canadians on circumpolar issues. The Government recognizes, though, that meaningful participation by northerners, including the territorial governments, in the policy formulation process faces significant hurdles, including resource constraints and the limited attention that northerners, particularly the Aboriginal leadership, are able to give to foreign policy issues. Overcoming these