

This explosion of initiatives and accomplishments is not coincidental. It reflects a keen sense that problems are great and that many can only be addressed through co-operation. It also reflects the recent revolution in Soviet policy on Arctic issues, a policy which, as in other areas, is now based on co-operation not competition, engagement not isolation.

Taken together, these developments demonstrate that if we act with vision we can construct a new architecture of Arctic co-operation. This region deserves more than a focus which is ad hoc or sporadic. It deserves the efficiency which can come from further international collaboration. It deserves the success which can only come from shared stewardship. It deserves the attention which will only result from political will, political direction.

In Leningrad last November, the Prime Minister suggested that Arctic nations might eventually establish a council to co-ordinate and promote co-operation among them. The Government believes that now is the time to move forward to establish that Arctic Council.

Canada intends to propose an Arctic Council to the seven other Arctic countries -- Finland, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Greenland, the United States and the Soviet Union. We will raise the proposal at a ministerial meeting in Finland next spring on environmental co-operation. Canada is willing to host a small secretariat for this Council and contribute to sustaining it from the outset.

The agenda of an Arctic Council should be flexible, allowing for growth with success, as confidence grows. In addition, the Government believes that it is crucial that an Arctic Council allow the voice of Northern people to be heard so that they may contribute to decisions affecting their lives and interests. Finally, an Arctic Council should be designed to include some appropriate input from non-member countries from outside the region who have interest in the Arctic and whose activities can affect that region -- for better or worse.

The challenge is great -- an environment in urgent need of cleansing, development which must be made sustainable, and unique social problems which require urgent attention. But the opportunity has also never been greater. With the Cold War over, and with our own concepts for security changing to address non-military threats to our future -- let us move forward. For no two countries is the responsibility and opportunity greater than for the U.S.S.R. and Canada. The Arctic must cease to be a frontier and become a bridge.