

SUMMARY REPORT FROM THE EXPERTS' ROUNDTABLE ON CANADA'S NORTHERN FOREIGN POLICY

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This is a summary report from the Experts' Roundtable convened in Ottawa by the Ambassador for Circumpolar Affairs, in cooperation with the Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, on December 16, 1998. It was attended by over 60 invited Canadian authorities on various aspects of Canada's north or Canada's northern foreign relations. About one-third of the participants were from Canada's north. The objective of the Roundtable was to involve these experts in the consultative process now underway in connection with the development of a new northern foreign policy for Canada.

This summary report sets out the major insights or ideas developed in the four working group sessions at the Roundtable. It is derived from notes taken by the rapporteurs. The ideas presented here will be taken into account as the process of elaborating a new northern foreign policy proceeds over the coming months.

OVERALL SHAPE OF THE NEW POLICY

- the policy paper should begin with a very substantial introduction, providing the context, purpose, limitations, and so on, of the new policy.
- the introduction should include a discussion of the growing role of actors other than the federal government in Canada's international relations generally, and of the evolution the federal government's role in foreign affairs is undergoing as a result (supported not least by both the limits on the federal government's resources and the growing assertiveness of other jurisdictions in the international realm). This should lead to a recognition that this pattern is evident in Canada's relations with the circumpolar world as well, pointing to limits on the federal government's role in Canada's northern foreign policy. An understanding of this serves to give focus to the federal government's new northern foreign policy.
- proceeding from this, the policy should serve at least four broad purposes:
 - to establish a coherent framework and a broadly supported set of achievable policy objectives to guide the federal government's activities in regard to the circumpolar north. In this connection, it should also provide a rational basis for seeking continued or expanded funding for northern projects;
 - to indicate those broad forms of support the federal government is prepared to make available for the rapidly expanding circumpolar activities being undertaken by others, including Canada's territorial and provincial governments, NGOs, corporations, land claims organizations, aboriginal governments, and so on;
 - to provide a basis for public accountability on federal government commitments connected with northern foreign policy (what it can and cannot be expected to do);
 - to communicate with Canadian stakeholders and the public and with foreign governments about Canada's northern foreign policy interests and intentions.