CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

STATEMENT
DISCOURS

SECRETARY
OF STATE
FOR EXTERNAL
AFFAIRS.

SECRÉTAIRE
D'ÉTAT AUX
AFFAIRES
EXTÉRIEURES.

87/72

Speech by the
Right Honourable Joe Clark,
Secretary of State for
External Affairs, to the
Norway-Canada Conference
on Circumpolar Issues

TROMSO, NORWAY
December 9, 1987.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Canadian Government recently conducted a thorough review of Canada's international relations, the first for 16 years. This time we were determined to open up the debate on foreign policy to all Canadians. From Saint John's in the East to Victoria in the West to Yellowknife in the North Canadians came forward with their views and concerns. They touched on every aspect of our foreign policy. They told us in no uncertain terms that Canadians remain as internationalist, as global in their world view as ever. Maybe more so.

One of the areas stressed in that review was the North. In hearings before the Parliamentary Committee an Inuit leader, Mark Gordon, argued forcefully that one of the problems with the North is that too often Northern policies are developed in isolation by southerners in capital cities in temperate zones. It is striking for me, and I expect for most of the Canadians in the room, that we are meeting here in Tromso - that Tromso is near the 70th parallel, well north of the Arctic Circle, indeed north of mainland Canada.

It is true that in Canada the majority of our population lives close to our border with the United States. But that fact does not diminish Canadians' sense of the North. Although the high Arctic may be more real to those who live there than to others, the North and the Arctic are a singular influence in the self-image of all Canadians. In the evocative words of a famous Canadian folk-song:

"Mon pays, ce n'est pas un pays, c'est l'hiver".

It is fitting that Norwegians and Canadians are meeting here this week. As we were reminded so memorably last night, 500 years before Columbus was even born Norsemen were exploring and settling in Canada-to-be.

Other countries came to settle the Americas. Through accidents of history Canadians came to speak English and French and not Norwegian! But Nordic peoples continued to fish and explore in Canada's North. They came more frequently in the late nineteenth century as the search for a northwest passage intensified. A Norwegian, Amunsden, finally found it. Larsen, the first Canadian to navigate that passage, was Norwegian born. Many islands and waterways are named after Norwegian explorers such as Nansen and Sverdrup. In fact we are probably lucky that today Norway lays no claim to the Northern half of Canada!

Norwegians joined in the massive flood of immigration to Canada between the 1880s and 1930. They have adapted to Canadian society with ease, while retaining elements of their distinctive culture and their language.

Norwegians contributed so much to Canadian society because our societies and our values are strikingly similar. I think our common Northern environment is a key factor: we each developed the difficult parts of our respective continents.

Canadians and Norwegians have common attitudes towards the individual and towards the individual's relationships with family, nature, God and one's fellow man. That is not simply a coincidence. It is a product of our common geography. Harsh climate and the challenge of survival breed an attitude of sharing, of cooperation, of responsibility.

We are both democratic societies, but more importantly, we believe in the same type of democracy. We believe passionately in freedom and in justice. We believe that collectively society has a duty to ensure the rights of minorities, to protect the weak and to maintain high standards of health, welfare, education and safety. In Northern climates government must provide services, strengthen the economy and protect the environment.

As Northern societies, we are both geographically remote: most of Canada from the heartland of North America, Norway from the European heartland. Politically and militarily we are neither the largest nor the smallest of states. We are both especially dependent on the international economic and political order. These realities have made both of us strong defenders of collective and international institutions such as NATO, the OECD and the UN system. In a world of superpowers and giant economic blocs, nations like Canada and Norway understand and can support each other.

This symposium has had sessions on resource development, historical trends, defence, legal issues and indigenous peoples. I want to address some Northern issues of particular concern to Canada and my government. These are issues where we seek Norwegian understanding, experience and wisdom - issues on which we can cooperate in the broader international community.

A northern dimension to our foreign policy is not new for Canada. In 1882 Canada was a participant in the first International Polar Year. Since then international cooperation in northern regions has been a special Canadian concern.

Our government's response to the joint parliamentary review of international relations focussed on four broad themes of a "comprehensive northern foreign policy". These themes are:

* affirming Canadian sovereignty

* modernizing Canada's northern defences

* preparing for the commercial use of the Northwest Passage, and

* promoting enhanced circumpolar cooperation.

The overwhelming Canadian challenge is geography, a vast, unique realm of land and water and ice.

The waters within the Arctic archipelago are not like warm waters which are used for international navigation. Our waters are in fact frozen most of the year - navigation as on the high seas is impossible. The shoreline is where open water meets solid ice, not where water meets land.

Indeed, Canadian Inuit live on this ice for part of the year: for them it is home. So whether terra firma or aqua firma Canada claims sovereignty over this entire area. In 1985 our government established straight baselines around the perimeter of the Arctic archipelago. This defines the outer limits of Canada's historic internal waters.

To open our Arctic waters we are building the world's largest icebreaker - a class 8 vessel. That ship will be used to keep open waterways and ports that are now closed part of the year. It will facilitate commerce and the development of our Northern resource potential.

We are improving the entire infrastructure that is needed for the control and development of the North. We are developing the means to provide basic information on weather, tides, currents, and ice conditions. We are developing aids to navigation and communications. We are evolving regulations for shipping, development and the protection of the environment. We are discussing with the United States an agreement whereby they would acknowledge the need to seek Canadian consent prior to passage by an American icebreaker through Canadian northern waters. Major efforts to protect the northern environment go back to 1970 when we passed the Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act.

All of these measures are essential for safe navigation in the Arctic. They are consistent with the Government's pledge to facilitate shipping in our internal archipelagic waters subject to our sovereignty, security and environmental requirements and the welfare of the inhabitants of the North.

We have also done extensive work in oil and gas exploration and development. Last summer we shipped oil from the Arctic. Lower oil prices have curtailed but not stopped that work. Our research and development in Northern resources is a continuing investment in the future.

When I say we are taking these measures, I mean the federal and the territorial governments, because the governance of our North is a partnership of national and local governments. Indeed, one of the most significant developments in Canada's North is the deliberate and gradual devolution of power and responsibility from Ottawa to Northern governments. Our government has also accelerated negotiations of aboriginal land claims - a complex process of fundamental importance to our northern peoples.

Another trend of enormous importance is growing circumpolar cooperation between countries north of the Arctic Circle.

- in the 1960's, we played a leading role in the formation of the International Permafrost Conference
- in 1971, we participated in the Canadian-Scandinavian workshop on caribou and reindeer
- in 1976 we reached agreement on the conservation of polar bears
- in 1983 Canada and Denmark reached agreement on environmental cooperation
- in 1984 Canada and the USSR agreed on exchanges in Arctic sciences
- in the 1980's, we supported the development of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference
- and most recently, Canada and Norway have intensified our commitment to cooperation in the field of science and technology.

So Canada has been actively involved in northern initiatives for a long time and my government is committed to intensifying its relations with Arctic neighbours.

We wish to see peaceful cooperation among Arctic Rim countries developed further. We were therefore encouraged when General Secretary Gorbachev stated at Murmansk on October 1 that the Soviet Union wished to increase its bilateral and multilateral cooperation in the Arctic. We have noted his suggestion of cooperation on energy, science and the environment among other areas.

We are pleased that he indicated the Soviet Union's interest in the creation of an Arctic Sciences Council, towards which Canada, Norway and other countries have been working. I understand you have been discussing this proposal and the concept of an Arctic Basin Council.

We have noted his interest in the development of cultural links among Arctic peoples. In circumpolar relations few things are as important as contacts between the Inuit, the Arctic native peoples of Canada, Greenland, the United States and the Soviet Union. It is our hope that the Soviet Union will agree for the first time, to attend the next Inuit Circumpolar Conference in 1989 and the Inuit Youth Camp in 1988, which Canada will host.

So we welcome Mr. Gorbachev's interest in the North. But we need - and have asked for - clarification on what it means in practice. And we will continue to pursue our own goals and interests in the Arctic.

The Murmansk speech also brings us to the issue of peace and security. The world watched last night the scene in Washington as General Secretary Gorbachev and President Reagan signed an agreement for the first-ever reductions in nuclear weapons. This historic disarmament agreement is solid proof of an improvement in East-West relations.

Peace and security are vital issues as well in the world's North. It is just since the 1950's that the Arctic has become a focus of military activity, and thus of more strategic concern for all of us.

Canada and Norway share membership in NATO. We both know that collective defence is necessary to deter aggression and to protect our way of life.

NATO has given us an unprecedented generation of peace. The Alliance is indispensable for defence and for encouraging arms control and disarmament. While the dynamics of East-West relations may change, while relationships may change even within the West, Canada's commitment to NATO has increased.

Each Alliance partner must strive to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of its contribution. Shortly after its election Prime Minister Mulroney's Government launched a review of Canada's defence policy. We found there was a serious gap between our commitments and our capabilities. We are taking steps to close that gap. We found our reserves were inadequate, our equipment out of date. These problems are being addressed.

We also found that our commitments were too numerous, scattered, and inefficient. We could certainly deploy troops in northern Norway. However, a recent exercise demonstrated that sustaining them would not be militarily feasible. The attempt to do so would also weaken substantially our forces in Central Europe.

You are well aware of the resulting decisions. In Europe, Canada's efforts are now to be concentrated on the Central Front. That will make our Alliance contribution more effective. And that will strengthen the Alliance - and the ultimate security of Norway - as a whole.

Of course Canada will continue to commit a battalion group to the Allied Command Europe Mobile Force for the protection of the northern flank.

In the Atlantic we are upgrading substantially the naval and air resources essential to maintaining sea lines of communication from North America to Western Europe through the acquisition of nuclear-propelled submarines and of modern surface vessels.

In our North we are replacing our outdated northern radar network by a modern North Warning System. Our air fields are being upgraded. More aircraft are being deployed, the number of surveillance flights increased. More military exercises are being held in the North. Surveillance systems are being developed to detect potentially hostile submarines.

The nuclear submarines we are acquiring for Atlantic and Pacific operations will also be used to detect and counter hostile naval activity in the Arctic, especially under ice where no other method of exercising control is effective.

In his Murmansk speech, Mr. Gorbachev proposed:

1) creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Northern Europe

2) limitation of military activity in the waters of the Baltic, North, Norwegian and Greenland Seas

3) examination of a total ban on naval activity in mutually agreed zones.

Canada is interested in developing realistic policies aimed at enhancing the security and stability of the Arctic region but we have serious reservations about these proposals. Our installations in the North, which I described earlier, are all defensive. Proposals to demilitarize our North would imply that we abandon our defences.

Similarly, proposals to declare the North a nuclear-weapon-free zone or to restrict naval movements in areas such as the Norwegian Sea overlook the fact that the nuclear-weapons threat is global, not regional. Both East and West have massive nuclear forces capable of mutual annihilation - weapons on land, sea and air, all over the globe.

Some may be in the Arctic. Some may pass over the Arctic. But the threat relates to the East-West rivalry, not the Arctic. Declaring the Arctic a nuclear-weapon-free zone or restricting certain naval movements there would do nothing to reduce the threat from these weapons. It would be destabilizing for other regions.

Mr. Gorbachev appears to focus exclusively on the Western Arctic without discussing the Barents Sea or other waters adjacent to the USSR. He does not offer any detail as to how a ban of naval activity would be verified or enforced. Obviously, it would be inappropriate to discuss the Western Arctic and not the Soviet Archipelago.

Finally, Mr. Gorbachev's words do not reflect the actions of his government. Unlike Canada or the Nordic countries, the Soviet Union has an enormous concentration of military forces and weapons in the Arctic region.

In Canada's view, the best prospects for progress toward enhanced security in the Arctic lie in a balanced, step-by-step approach to arms control and disarmament. Our security in the Arctic is a direct function both of the solidarity and cohesion of the Alliance, the climate of East-West relations and progress toward balanced reductions of nuclear weapons.

The North is deeply embedded in the consciousness of Canadians. The North conveys images of breathtaking beauty and of climatic extremes. We have contradictory impressions of vast natural resources locked in an incredibly fragile environment. We seek both modernization in the North and the preservation of traditional ways of life. We seek to protect the precious ecology and beauty of the North, while making it accessible to those from the South.

Throughout our history we have also had Northern dreams, often dashed on this harsh environment. I hope that we have drawn some lessons from our experience. I would like to suggest a few.

The first lesson is the crucial importance of cooperation. Only seven countries have territory north of the Arctic Circle. Only five of them border on the Arctic Ocean. While the North may be important to all of them, the vast majority of the populations of all these countries lies far to the south of the Arctic Circle.

If there is to be progress in meeting the challenges of the North, there must be a sharing of information, ideas, experience and technology by the few countries concerned. Canada and Norway are especially qualified to take the lead in sharing. Indeed, this seminar is of particular importance to developing that cooperation. Canada would consider hosting a further meeting of Northern countries in 1988 or 89.

Second, we should exploit improvements in East-West relations to pursue peaceful cooperation among all Arctic nations. The Soviet Union occupies 50% of the Arctic shoreline. Although it is ahead of us in some areas of development, it has much to learn from us in other areas. We share problems such as the environment that demand cooperation.

Canada intends to expand its Arctic programs with the Soviet Union and with other Arctic countries. Together we can develop this challenging landscape, protect this fragile environment. Indeed, cooperation in the North can help build confidence, it is a bridge between our societies.

The third lesson is that we must all learn from the Inuit and the Saami, the people who have lived for many centuries in the North. And we can learn lessons that are relevant far beyond the Northern environment. Let me quote Robert Williamson, a Canadian anthropologist who has devoted his life to the study of the North.

"In the Canadian Arctic...I found peace. It was the Inuit people there, and their values. They lived interdependently ... They knew that their survival depended on harmony and cooperation. They had found ways of minimizing suspicion, channelling stress positively, and withdrawing with integrity from potential conflict".

These are lessons we all must learn. In the North and in the whole world. Thank you.