



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

FAAE • NUMBER 067 • 1st SESSION • 41st PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Tuesday, February 26, 2013

—
Chair

Mr. Dean Allison

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Tuesday, February 26, 2013

• (1100)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)): Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), our study of Canada's Arctic foreign policy will continue.

I would like to welcome as an individual, Ted McDorman, professor in the Faculty of Law, University of Victoria. Glad to have you here today.

From the Government of Nunavut, we've got Ed Zebedee, director of protection services. Mr. Zebedee, welcome to you as well.

We will start with your testimony. I believe, Mr. Zebedee, that you're going to go first. We'll give each of you eight to ten minutes for your testimony and then we'll go back and forth across the room for questions to follow up.

Thank you for taking the time to be here, as we are wrapping up our study on this topic over the next couple of weeks. We look forward to what you have to say.

Mr. Zebedee, I'm going to turn the floor over to you, sir, and you've got eight to ten minutes for your opening statement.

Mr. Ed Zebedee (Director, Protection Services, Government of Nunavut): Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the invitation to speak today.

As I am a long-time northerner, in my opinion the perfect person was chosen when it was announced that the Honourable Leona Aglukkaq would chair the Arctic Council. While many study the north, you can only truly understand the challenges and complexities facing the north if you have lived there.

Climate change, economic development, sovereignty, and the environment are important issues to the north. All of these directly impact the safety and well-being of northerners. In my role within the Government of Nunavut, balancing these issues with meeting the needs of our citizens influences how we make decisions in delivering programs.

Recently, the Arctic Council created a task force to work on an international instrument for Arctic marine oil pollution preparedness and response. I believe that a draft document has been completed and is under review. Prior to this, an agreement among circumpolar states was reached on search and rescue in the Arctic. This is to be applauded. However, a commitment of substantial resources to both people and equipment is required to meet the intent detailed in the agreement.

Search and rescue in the Arctic is something I live with on a daily basis. Culturally, being on the land, using the natural resources by fishing and hunting to obtain food, skins, and other material is a part of traditional northern peoples' lives. Today, it also has a large economic benefit. Many are hunters or trappers and rely on the land as part of their livelihood.

Over the years, we have seen a steady increase in search and rescue incidents. Climate change is a major factor facing a hunter today. Hunters must travel farther from their homes into areas they traditionally did not travel. This puts them at greater risk of getting lost or worse. Elders now say they can no longer read the weather.

The Government of Nunavut responds to approximately 150 search and rescue incidents each year. In 2012, we responded to 178 incidents involving 315 people. Most search and rescues involve northerners, but as northern development escalates, tourism and vessel traffic in the opening Arctic waters will naturally multiply. The increase in air transportation and shipping that coincides with resource development will further add to the environmental and human risk. The increase in economic development equals an increase in shipping. As the Arctic seaway opens more and more, sea traffic will expand. A major emergency or environmental disaster is waiting to happen.

We have already been beset with challenges involving a cruise ship and two fuel tankers in Nunavut waters. All three incidents took place within one month of each other. The motor vessel *Clipper Adventurer*, with 128 people on board, ran aground near Kugluktuk. It took the Coast Guard two days to reach the ship and remove passengers to the local community. Such incidents could have resulted in loss of life or a huge environmental disaster. The nearest Coast Guard ship was 500 kilometres away in the Beaufort Sea.

While the Canadian Forces can respond with 11 hours to an incident anywhere in the Canadian Arctic, that response will likely be a Hercules aircraft with SAR technicians. They will and have given their lives to assist those in need, but their efforts could be futile without the ability to evacuate survivors in a reasonable time. Also consider the 100,000 international airline passengers who fly over the Arctic every day. A forced landing in one of the harshest climates in the world would require a response in a matter of hours. How do we develop the response capacity for the Arctic? How do we consider the costs?

Purchasing equipment, building facilities, and training personnel will be expensive. For example, look at the costs of the proposed offshore vessels. The costs of these vessels will be in the many millions of dollars, with additional millions of dollars in operational costs annually. But I would suggest they are better equipped to operate in southern waters than in the Arctic. With the lack of port facilities the operational time in the Arctic will be limited to just a few weeks before they must return to a port.

• (1105)

But we don't have to do that. For less money than the cost of these vessels, we could equip, operate, and at the same time support Arctic communities and people to take on this role. We would add seasonal employment, increase the capacity to respond in a timely manner, increase our sovereignty, increase our situational awareness in the area, and in the long run save money. Task the Canadian Rangers into a role that would meet all these objectives.

For approximately \$1.5 million annually, vessels in the north could be operated by northerners. The operations and maintenance budget could fund the patrol during the summer months and be the eyes and ears of the military. Moreover, the vessels could be utilized for marine search and rescue calls. People could also be trained in marine oil-spill containment. The vessels would proudly carry a Canadian flag.

As co-chair of the northern round table on search and rescue, it has become more and more apparent that what is lacking is a national search and rescue policy. The Government of Canada, after a royal commission in the 1970s, set up the National Search and Rescue Secretariat. Its role was to set policy and develop processes and procedures for inter-jurisdictional, inter-departmental response for search and rescue.

Over the years, there have been many reviews and reports published with conclusions and recommendations on improving and developing a national search and rescue policy. These documents are available on the secretariat's website. Few, if any, of the recommendations have ever been implemented.

I would suggest that the Arctic Council develop a national search and rescue policy that could be held up as an internationally accepted instrument for other Arctic jurisdictions to adopt and implement. The benefit would be for all our citizens.

As resource development increases, so will the population in the Arctic. There's a constant need to replace outdated infrastructure and to add new facilities. This will only grow as the north develops. But without the implementation of a long-term transportation strategy, and the financial backing to execute the plan, we are hostage to a very fragile system. Perishable food, drugs, and other supplies must come by air. While many goods come during the annual sea lift, the daily necessities rely on this system. Serious medical emergencies cannot be handled in many communities, and rely only on the air transportation system. This system is at best antiquated and limited.

In Nunavut, only two airport locations have instrument-assisted landing systems. Runways are mostly unpaved, have limited capacity to land large aircraft, and have only basic Nav Canada services. Should we ever lose a power generation plant, only half the

communities have a runway that will accept aircraft large enough to bring in replacement generators.

Northern development has always been tied to transportation. Note how in Canada the area once called the Northwest Territories became a large part of Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. This all came about when the railroad was built and opened the frontier. The north is the next frontier to be opened, and a transportation system will be the only way that the potential of the north is realized.

As noted previously, there is only one deep-water port, and it is located at the abandoned Nanisivik mine site. While the annual sea lift is critical to the operation of all communities in Nunavut, it adds an additional risk due to the lack of proper docking facilities. Fuel must be pumped to a shore-receiving area in floating booms, increasing the chance of an ocean spill. All equipment and goods must be transferred from the main ship to tugboats pushing barges, which are then pushed ashore for offloading—again, increasing risk and time to deliver. Without proper docking facilities, even with a heavy-class icebreaker, emergency supplies could not be landed in communities in the winter.

A major emergency in the community will quickly overwhelm the resources available. Without further development of transportation infrastructure, most communities would have to be evacuated if we lost the most basic services. The loss of a power plant, fuel storage facility, or water treatment facility could close a community for many months, if not years. The human and financial impact would be devastating.

• (1110)

The north has changed in the 30 years I've lived there. While I know that most northerners are much more resilient than their southern neighbours, we are unfortunately becoming a just-in-time society. A five-day blizzard in Iqaluit impacts throughout Baffin Island communities. Perishable foods such as milk and vegetables are quickly sold out. The supply chain is interrupted, and priority shipping of goods leaves other goods, no matter how badly needed, sitting in Ottawa or Yellowknife.

We recently held a conference on food security and the need for utilizing more country food such as locally caught fish, seal, and caribou. But what was missed is that in today's world food security comes from a robust and sustainable transportation system, a system that will allow for the products and goods to be shipped at a comparable cost and as reliably as for southern shipping.

I thank you for your time, and I hope I've given you some ideas and some thoughts to take away.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Zebedee.

We'll now turn it over to Mr. McDorman.

Professor Ted McDorman (Faculty of Law, University of Victoria, As an Individual): Thank you for inviting me to appear today before your committee. I hope I can be of some service to the committee. I must state at the beginning, however, that I have not lived in the Arctic. I have studied the Arctic. So perhaps we make a good balance. I'm not sure.

I am a law professor at the University of Victoria in beautiful British Columbia and a Nova Scotian, let there be no doubt about that—I have Dalhousie Law degrees to prove it. In this area of my academic work, which is the international law of the sea, I am a bit unusual in Canada in that I have lived and have professional experience on both coasts. But of course, I am quick to say that I do not have life experience on the Arctic coast.

I am currently away from my university post. I am on secondment to the legal branch of the Department of Foreign Affairs where I provide some assistance on a number of the issues that arise respecting international law of the sea and other international law issues. The head of the legal branch where I work, Alan Kessel, appeared before you in November of last year.

This is the second time I have been on secondment to the Department of Foreign Affairs and can assure you that working within the federal government on legal and policy issues makes this academic less prone to sweeping generalizations and the assuredness of opinion and views than I may have once held. More directly stated, what appear to be simple issues susceptible to an easy fix inevitably are not.

At any rate, I am here today solely in my academic role as one who has studied at one time or another almost all of the international law of the sea issues, so I am very heavily focused on the international ocean issues that arise and are discussed between Canada and other countries in the Arctic.

This committee has already heard from a number of Canada's outstanding international lawyers with knowledge and insights on Arctic Ocean legal issues—Alan Kessel, Don McRae from the University of Ottawa, and Michael Byers from the University of British Columbia. I have read their testimony and have little of substance to add; hence, I will be reinforcing what has already been said. How I might be of some value to the committee is in answering any questions committee members may have on some of the technical legal issues regarding matters such as the legal status of the waters and sea floor of the Arctic Ocean and the Northwest Passage, maritime boundary issues in the Arctic Ocean, and fishing and shipping matters respecting the Arctic Ocean.

Despite my reluctance to speak in absolutes, here are four absolutes, certainties, or truths about the Arctic Ocean, international law, and politics. When do public speaking, I frequently start by saying “Here are four truths”, or sometimes I will say, “Here are three and a half truths”, but today I have four truths that I want to put forward that I think are incontestable. I know they are incontestable as a matter of international law.

First, all of the land in Canada's Arctic, with the wonderful exception of Hans Island, is unquestionably under Canadian sovereignty and not subject to any challenge by any other state. Second, as a matter of international law, the Arctic Ocean is the same as every other ocean in that the same international legal regime applies as elsewhere. In this case, this is the 1982 Law of the Sea Convention, as well as other multilateral treaties, whether they deal with shipping or whatever, that apply to all oceans. They apply as well in the Arctic Ocean, with the result, as emphasized by Alan Kessel when he spoke to you, and the others, that there is no international legal vacuum in the Arctic Ocean.

The implications of this are as follows. First, all of the Arctic Ocean's coastal states have 200 nautical mile zones, similar to the zones that Canada has, for example, on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. As well, Canada and the other Arctic Ocean states have exclusive sovereign rights over the mineral resources located on the continental shelf beyond 200 nautical miles. Again, these are the same rights that Canada has off the coast of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador: clear, uncontested, continental shelf rights beyond 200 nautical miles, over the legal continental shelf.

•(1115)

As with other oceans, the Arctic Ocean is simultaneously an area of exclusive national jurisdiction and an area of certain international rights exercisable by and available to all states. Navigation rights are an example of this exercisable right by all states in the central Arctic Ocean basin. Essentially the Arctic Ocean is both an area of exclusive national jurisdiction over certain things, such as mineral resources, and international activity takes place in the central Arctic Ocean perfectly legally, largely in the realm of navigation. The point is that both Arctic and non-Arctic states have rights and obligations respecting the Arctic Ocean, as they do in other oceans.

As with other oceans, so too with the Arctic Ocean, there is value in and room for appropriate Arctic Ocean-specific agreements on special topics, as has been seen and already referred to with the search and rescue agreement and the recently reported agreement on Arctic Ocean oil pollution preparedness and response. As in other parts of the world, one can expect other agreements on other topics in the future.

My third absolute certainty or truth—I forget which one I'm using today—is that there is absolutely no question in international law that the waters, including the sea floor and all of the resources therein within the Arctic archipelago and the Northwest Passage, are Canadian. The debate with the United States is exclusively over rights of navigation through the waters that the U.S. proclaims to be an international strait, and Canada rejects this claim.

I characterize this issue as not being whether the Northwest Passage area is Canadian; rather the question is how Canadian is the Northwest Passage? Is it like Wascana Lake in Regina or Halifax harbour—brilliantly located in Halifax—all Canadian for all purposes, in other words? That would be the Canadian view. Is it all Canadian but for a right of vessel navigation? That is the position asserted by the United States.

The fourth legal certainty of mine is that the international legal disputes involving Canada in the Arctic Ocean are no different from those disputes that exist elsewhere and should be viewed and understood in that context. The existence of a dispute, for example a maritime boundary dispute, does not mean there is a crisis or even all that much actual friction between the states involved.

Concerning maritime boundaries, Canada has maritime boundary disputes with the United States on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts and, of course, in the Beaufort Sea, dating back to at least to the 1970s, and perhaps, depending upon your point of view, a little bit earlier than that. Yet these ocean disputes have caused little actual friction between the two countries.

Canada and the United States even have a land territory dispute, noted as recently as December in *The Globe and Mail*, dealing with Machias Seal Island, which, if you don't know, is off the coast of New Brunswick near Grand Manan Island. It's clearly Canadian, of course, but the U.S. has a different view. It has caused little friction, unless you happen to be a lobster fisherman from that area, in which case, yes, it does create friction in that context.

The Northwest Passage disagreement also goes back to the 1970s, yet there has been surprisingly little actual friction between the countries, albeit when the Northwest Passage has arisen as an on-the-water issue, both in 1970 and in 1985, for example, there was much political heat in Ottawa. The point that I'm trying to make is that it is not the existence of the dispute that matters. Rather, it is whether the dispute is causing friction between the states involved. Using this standard, none of Canada's perceived Arctic disputes come close to a crisis level. More colourfully perhaps, whatever the causes of the loss of ice cover in the Arctic Ocean, it is not caused by the heat arising from Canada's international ocean law disputes.

The above is not to say that resolution of these international legal disputes and Canada's Arctic Ocean dispute is not a worthwhile goal. Indeed, it may turn out in time to be a management necessity. Rather, it is to say that care must be taken in evaluating the significance or importance of a particular dispute. Also, for those who advocate a particular solution to some of these disputes, care must be taken that the full political and legal costs and benefits are taken into account in any proposed solution.

• (1120)

Given my love of prime numbers, I'm actually going to add a fifth absolute truth or certainty. I think it's more of an observation. We'll see how it goes.

On matters regarding international ocean law and policies for the Arctic Ocean, despite views to the contrary, there is a fair degree of bilateral and multilateral cooperation and, perhaps more important, common understanding amongst the Arctic states, aided by the Arctic Council and evidenced by the unfairly maligned 2008 Ilulissat

Declaration. There is also a fair degree of common understanding and cooperation respecting the Arctic Ocean between the Arctic and non-Arctic states. It is this cooperation and mutual understanding on Arctic Ocean law of the sea that I expect to continue to inform and guide these aspects of Canada's Arctic foreign policy.

Once again, thank you for your invitation to attend. I look forward to doing my best with any questions that may arise. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McDorman.

We're going to start off with Mr. Bevington, sir.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

As a lifelong northerner and someone who once grew up in a community that was only supplied by a barge, I understand and appreciate the concerns that you've raised, Mr. Zebedee. I appreciate everything that you've said here. What I would say in that regard is that we obviously don't have much to brag about. If we are going to make this a focus of our Arctic Council discussions over the next two years, showing and telling the failings of the Canadian transportation system throughout the Arctic, I think the leaves a little bit to be desired in terms of our foreign policy.

The Arctic Council really is the only place where international agreements are being worked on on a regular basis, whether they be the environment or shipping. In the political vein, the Arctic Council remains a very important international body to deal with issues between states. I think there's something that we've been discussing over the past number of meetings in that particular regard.

I agree entirely with your presentation. I wish you would have made it to the northern development committee hearings that were held by the natural resources committee a few months ago, because they needed to hear what you have said—they really did—and I thank you very much for it.

Mr. McDorman, you say that there's no crisis in the Arctic and that the maritime boundaries issues are not significant. Yet everybody is positioning on them. The United States in the last four years has put forward fishing regulations in the disputed area. They have also put forward regulations around air emissions from oil and gas developments in that region. They include it as part of their maritime responsibility. So we see the United States as actively establishing authority over that area, which is not matched by Canada. In fact, Canada had to send diplomatic letters to the United States over these issues. I don't know if they did it on the air emissions, but they certainly did it on the fishing issue, as revealed in Parliament. These things are not static but are moving.

I have a question for you on the disposition of the Arctic Ocean. There's a doughnut hole in the Arctic right now, in the Arctic Ocean. Perhaps you could explain how that works. You might want to comment on the other things as well.

• (1125)

Prof. Ted McDorman: If I might comment first on the United States, I would say it is not surprising when the United States deals with its 200 nautical mile zone that it includes within it the small sliver that we also claim as part of our 200 nautical mile zone. When Canada enacts legislation for our fisheries zone, it goes into what the United States claims to be its 200 nautical mile zone. The fact this occurs, I would say, is a result of both countries not following good legal advice as to what not to include. Within our fisheries regulations, and to the extent we have explicit regulations in the Canadian Arctic, we go out to our 200 nautical miles, including into the area the U.S. claims. So a U.S. senator or a U.S. congressman would be making exactly the same statements you are.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: It's not exactly the same thing as a ban on fishing in that area.

Prof. Ted McDorman: We have not adopted a ban on fishing.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: But the U.S. has adopted one.

Prof. Ted McDorman: But the U.S. ban on fishing applies to its 200 nautical mile economic zone, which it includes as part of our area. It is not specifically targeted at the overlapping claim. It is a generic one that applies to all of the 200-nautical-mile zone north of Alaska.

The protest notes are a legal way of just letting the other country know that we've noticed. While I don't have any first-hand knowledge, I assume that when we do things out there the U.S. sends us a protest note. It's just what happens.

On the second question, yes, there is a doughnut hole or however you wish to call it. One has to be careful here that one is referring to the water column, so we're talking beyond 200 nautical miles in the Arctic Ocean. There is a large area that would be described as high seas. This is the same thing that exists beyond Canada's 200-nautical-mile zones on the east coast. Beyond 200 nautical miles is the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, the high seas, and there is that area in the Arctic Ocean.

One has to differentiate the 200 nautical mile zone from the continental shelf area. The continental shelf is not constrained as a legal matter by the 200-nautical-mile zone, so the continental shelf for Canada in the Arctic, while it is not yet clear where this will go, will undoubtedly go well beyond 200 nautical miles, much as it does on the Atlantic Coast, well beyond 200 nautical miles off the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So you have the situation in the Arctic, as you say, of a doughnut hole in the water column, but we don't know yet just exactly how much area may be left for the international seabed authority and the community on the sea floor.

• (1130)

Mr. Dennis Bevington: What would that authority be on that continental shelf area?

Prof. Ted McDorman: Do you mean for Canada?

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Beyond the 200 mile limit, what would the authority be? Would it just simply be extraction?

Prof. Ted McDorman: It applies to mineral resources, which would be hydrocarbon resources and any mineral resources that exist

within the sea floor beyond 200 nautical miles. Oddly enough, it also applies to scallops and things that live on the sea floor that are fisheries resources. Those resources are also captured as part of it. But it is all mineral resources in the sea floor beyond 200 nautical miles, to the outer limit of where Canada can go. Just exactly where that is has not yet been determined.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to start with the government side.

Mr. Dechert, you have the floor for seven minutes, please.

Mr. Bob Dechert (Mississauga—Erindale, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Zebedee and Mr. McDorman, for being here and sharing your expertise with us.

I wonder if I could start briefly with Mr. Zebedee. You mentioned at the outset of your remarks that it was important that the chair of the Arctic Council be someone who has actually lived and spent a lot of time in the Arctic. You mentioned Minister Aglukkaq.

I know others have expressed a view that perhaps the Minister of Foreign Affairs would be a better choice.

Can you expand on that and tell us why you believe Minister Aglukkaq is a better choice?

Mr. Ed Zebedee: She understands the north, and she understands the challenges.

Our feeling is that the Arctic Council is not so much a foreign group as a group of like-minded people who think about Arctic issues. While they are international, they are very focused on what they are looking at. They are looking at their areas and their peoples in those areas.

Northern peoples overlap. We have huge relationships with Greenland. I have friends who are Inuit in Iqaluit who have relatives in Greenland.

For us it seems a better fit.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Do you agree it's important to have input from the indigenous people of the region in all those countries?

Mr. Ed Zebedee: Yes, I do.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Does that include Russia?

Mr. Ed Zebedee: Right now, I think the restrictions that Russia has put on its people is a mistake on its part. Hopefully, it will rethink that.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Thank you.

I want to switch briefly to Professor McDorman.

Professor, in response to a question from my colleague on the other side, you mentioned the relatively minor dispute between Canada and the U.S. over the 200-mile zone. You're probably aware that the Government of Canada is undertaking a \$40 million study over four years to determine the extent of the Canadian continental shelf.

Can you fill us in a little bit on why that's important and what's being done in that study, if you know about it?

Prof. Ted McDorman: From a legal perspective, the study is to determine where the outer limit of Canada's continental shelf is, not only in the Arctic but on the other coasts as well. This process is very science driven. In relatively simple terms, the 200 nautical mile zone is the 200 nautical mile zone. You take a ruler—although that's oversimplifying it—and you go and measure it.

The outer limit of the continental shelf is determined by a combination of sedimentary thickness, foot of slope points, 60 nautical miles from the foot of slope points, 1% sedimentary thickness backwards, plus a number of constraint lines. It is a very science-driven process; hence, the project that's ongoing aims to acquire and interpret the scientific information in the Arctic and thereby enable us to submit our information to something called the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf.

They are a science body set up under the law of the sea convention and will review, in time, the Canadian submission. They'll make recommendations, and then the Canadian government will look at these recommendations and do what it thinks is appropriate in light of the recommendations that have been given.

• (1135)

Mr. Bob Dechert: Do you know whether the Americans have done a similar study of their continental shelf?

Prof. Ted McDorman: The Americans, because they are not a party to the law of the sea convention, are working slightly differently. They also have multiple areas around the world, of which the Arctic is only one. The U.S. has clearly been doing scientific work in the Arctic. Interestingly and notably, a lot of that research work has been done in cooperation with Canada. There are cooperation agreements between the two governments regarding a number of the scientific expeditions that have taken place in the high Arctic.

There are great photos of the American vessel breaking the ice and the Canadian vessel doing all the heavy lifting in the middle of the Arctic Ocean. It's an interesting example of the cooperation between our two countries.

Mr. Bob Dechert: As an expert in the international law of the sea, then, is it your view that the results of this study that's being done now should settle that dispute between Canada and the United States?

Prof. Ted McDorman: It will not settle the dispute between Canada and the United States.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Will it provide the information to settle it?

Prof. Ted McDorman: It will provide more information. The reality of the dispute in the boundary area in the Arctic Ocean at the moment is that we know where the disputed area is within 200 nautical miles because we have both drawn our 200-nautical-mile zone. What has not taken place is that neither country has made any indication of the claims beyond 200 nautical miles, so I cannot tell you where Canada claims and the U.S. cannot tell you where the U.S. claims.

Mr. Bob Dechert: I'm sorry to interrupt, but can you roughly tell us the size of the area that's in dispute between Canada and the United States?

Prof. Ted McDorman: Beyond 200 nautical miles, no, I can't. I'm sorry.

Mr. Bob Dechert: All right. You mentioned the international law of the sea in connection with commercial shipping, the Northwest Territories, which you say is indisputably in Canadian territory—

Prof. Ted McDorman: The Northwest Passage.

Mr. Bob Dechert: —sorry, the Northwest Passage—

Prof. Ted McDorman: That's the Canadian position, yes.

Mr. Bob Dechert: —which is definitely in Canadian territory.

Can you explain a little more the source of the U.S. disagreement over navigation? Is it just that they're claiming they have a right to navigate because it's an international passageway?

Prof. Ted McDorman: Essentially that's correct. I'd use slightly different wording, but you're dead on. The United States takes the view that the Northwest Passage is an international strait used for international navigation. That has a very particular context in international law. If your body of water is a strait used for international navigation, then there is a navigational right. This exists, for example, in important areas like the Strait of Malacca and the Strait of Gibraltar. This is a critical issue.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Do they then have to show that it's used regularly for that purpose? Is it of like a right of way across land?

Prof. Ted McDorman: Yes and no. The U.S. has done this, not physically but through protest notes and other sorts of things. This is how good international lawyers and governments protect their legal positions. Whenever this issue comes up, you'll notice that somebody in the United States pops up and says, "By the way, it's an international strait."

Mr. Bob Dechert: I have one quick question, then. If it were an international strait, is Canada obligated to provide navigational charting or search and rescue services for the Northwest Passage?

Prof. Ted McDorman: Not under the law of the sea convention, although under other agreements they may be. There's Arctic search and rescue and things like that. There's an international search and rescue agreement.

The Chair: Thank you. That's all the time we have.

Mr. Eyking, sir, seven minutes.

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, gentlemen, for coming. I'm a Nova Scotian, so welcome, Ted, and it's good to see you here, Ed.

Mr. Zebedee, my first question is about infrastructure.

Over the years, we've had various governments and different infrastructure agreements. Most of them are based on provincial instead of territorial agreements. You often see one-third, one-third, one-third. We had an agreement a few years ago on the GST rebate, but the reality is that the whole Arctic area is totally different. You don't have the big GST and wouldn't have that rebate. You have vast territories there, and you mentioned the challenges involved.

You stressed how infrastructure is going to be key to the north's developing properly and how it can move forward with the rest of the economies south of the Arctic circle.

Sometimes we, as governments, pile all this money into infrastructure for a short time just to help boost the economy. When you're doing stuff up north, of course, you must have a lot more planning because of your short season, the frost, etc.

Do you think it's time that the current government looked at a different kind of an infrastructure deal, not just in terms of money but in terms of having longer-term vision, where we're talking of at least 10–15 years? Does a new deal need to be made because of how the Arctic is opening up and the challenges there? What kind of deal would you suggest?

• (1140)

Mr. Ed Zebedee: We need to develop a strategy that looks forward 10 or 20 years and is based on the basic infrastructure needs at community levels, particularly ports and airports. We're never going to develop road systems, or it will be many years before even a railway system exists, but ports are critical. Right now, we have no ports. A ship comes into Iqaluit to offload an annual sealift and it's there for 10 days because it can offload only at high tide. For 12 hours they run barges back and forth and for 12 hours they sit doing nothing, and that happens in all the other communities.

So it's a long-term strategy that we need.

Hon. Mark Eyking: How could you avoid that?

Mr. Ed Zebedee: We need ports.

Hon. Mark Eyking: Would you have a wharf going out farther or a deeper port?

Mr. Ed Zebedee: We need port infrastructure. There are no wharves. They are building a wharf in Pangnirtung for fishery ships, but it's not a deepwater port. It's going to be limited in terms of the size of ships that can come in. Other than that, there are no ports anywhere.

When we're doing our emergency planning, the critical thing for us is what will happen if we have to get equipment into a community in the wintertime. If it happens to be a community with one of the shorter runways, we close the community and we evacuate the people. That's what would happen.

Hon. Mark Eyking: Do you see other countries, Norway, or some of the other countries that share the Arctic Circle, investing way more in their ports? Are they doing things differently than we are in Canada?

Mr. Ed Zebedee: I know that Russia has invested heavily in its Arctic communities and infrastructure, both in ports and in basic infrastructure.

Hon. Mark Eyking: What you would like to see is an agreement of at least 10 to 15 years, one that would say, "Okay, here's the amount of money and here's the plan", so that people could invest and carry on with their lives, or even live up there, depending on what that investment would be.

Mr. Ed Zebedee: I would suggest to you that the economic development coming into the north in the next 15 to 20 years is going to pay back any infrastructure building. Given the amount of

mineral resources, the oil and gas, the potential in the Arctic is there. To develop these, you're going to need that transportation system.

Hon. Mark Eyking: So you see this as a similar situation to when we built the railroad or the Trans-Canada Highway or the St. Lawrence Seaway, or many of our facilities. It's the same kind of thing, that we just have to get ahead of the curve.

Mr. Ed Zebedee: That's correct.

Hon. Mark Eyking: Okay, thank you.

Mr. McDorman, do you think that we should have a special deal with the United States on the Northwest Passage, similar to what we had with the St. Lawrence Seaway?

They are our biggest trading partner, they are our close ally on defence. There's no big problem right now with Russia, as we do have NATO. What if we had an agreement with the Americans? Assume that they might bring minerals, or oil, or products out of Alaska, and that it might be better for them to ship to Europe.

Do you think we should sit down with them and have some sort of a different arrangement, similar to the St. Lawrence Seaway, because of our proximity to them? Even on the defence side, maybe it's to our advantage that they have military ships there, in the long run.

Prof. Ted McDorman: I'm sorry, but I'm going to avoid the question. I'm in an odd position as an academic who is currently working within the Department of Foreign Affairs, but I don't want to be seen.... This is an issue of policy. I can explain to you the background law, which is what the other questions have been about until now, but I don't wish to venture an opinion on that at this time. I'm sorry.

Hon. Mark Eyking: Can you answer a question about whether a country should have preferential treatment? Not necessarily the United States, but you did mention that the straits off Singapore are for everybody, that agreement there, right? Do you—

• (1145)

Prof. Ted McDorman: There's not an agreement in the strait, but it's an odd kind of agreement in the Strait of Malacca. It does not actually guarantee rights. That is an open ocean that any country, any state, and any vessel can go through. There's not an agreement per se with the Strait of Malacca.

There is a complex agreement between the strait states and some of the user states on the somewhat voluntary arrangements dealing with navigational aids. I was using that as an example of what is seen as an international strait by the United States, and why this is important, not necessarily that the Northwest Passage is or is not an international strait. The Canadian view is not the U.S. view that it is. As for the St. Lawrence Seaway analogy that we've read about numerous times, there are some very difficult political and legal issues that would have to be sorted through very carefully.

I am sorry, sir, but that's about as far as I can go on that. I have views on the law and can tell you about the law to answer those kinds of questions, but on the more speculative things I respectfully decline to respond at this moment.

The Chair: You're out of time anyway, so we'll save you with the time.

Prof. Ted McDorman: If I'd known that, I would have shut up immediately.

Voices: Oh, oh!

The Chair: We'll start a second round, which will be five minutes for each side.

Mr. Van Kesteren, we'll start with you, sir.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Thanks to both of you for appearing here. It's very informative. There are some great insights.

We've been talking a little bit about the opportunity for business. Even this morning we've certainly touched on it. It's enormous. When I talk to Minister Aglukkaq, she tells me of all the wonderful opportunities in that region of the world. It's just incredible.

I suppose we should be asking the question about businesses operating, and specifically those people and those organizations that have on-the-ground experience. Maybe both of you can answer this question. Do you think that the creation of a formal circumpolar business forum would be useful for sharing best practices on responsible resource development? Is that an idea that you've floated around? Is it something that you think might be useful?

Mr. Zebedee?

Mr. Ed Zebedee: It would be very helpful and interesting to see, from their perspective, the way that other Arctic countries have dealt with resources and the lessons they've learned. Resource development in the Arctic is difficult, so to hear from any country with some expertise in that area would be welcome.

I think that opening a forum among the circumpolar countries on infrastructure development would pay dividends. Russia has quite a bit of history in Arctic development and community ports and runway development. I don't know about the other countries, but I know that Russia does. Some of their lessons would be interesting to learn.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Mr. McDorman?

Prof. Ted McDorman: Let me just say no. It's well beyond my area of knowledge and expertise, but I do point out as a matter of fact that when you're talking about the European Arctic, you have to realize that there's Murmansk and then there's Tromsø in Norway. These are significant population areas.

One of the perceptual difficulties that exists in the Arctic is that there is really no single Arctic area, in some respects. There is in terms of weather and other issues, but the infrastructure, the cities, and the populations that exist in northern Russia and northern Norway are completely different from what exists in the North American Arctic. I think it's sometimes a little difficult to compare the two. It's not that we can't learn lessons, and I'm not suggesting that, but it is a very different situation in some respects.

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Maybe I'll direct this question to you then.

We speak of the north, and we speak about the Arctic. How would you compare the two distinct regions? Are there distinct regions or are they one and the same? Maybe you could just clarify the

distinction between the two terms, because oftentimes we just call the north "the north", but should we refer to it as the Arctic?

Prof. Ted McDorman: The international lawyer in me will tell you immediately that there is no agreement on what the terms mean. They are in the eyes of the beholder. In the areas in which I've looked at international treaties and things that talk about the Arctic Ocean, it has been described in different ways in different places and different contexts.

Once again I'm being rather useless, but as a professor, I'm used to that.

• (1150)

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren: Let me ask you this question as well. We've talked about the north opening up and we're hearing more and more about the ice breaking up. Do you foresee a significant expansion in shipping in the Arctic? What would the implications be for the region?

Prof. Ted McDorman: I can go by the Arctic marine shipping assessment, which was done through the Arctic Council. I think it has already been referred to here in this committee by other speakers. It was done two or three years ago. It was a comprehensive study of shipping in the Arctic, both in terms of some legal stuff—fortunately not too much, so it's moderately readable—and also about expectations. The projections they made were not so much in terms of dates as routes. They said that the northern sea route, the northeast passage, if you will, over Russia will probably be open first. We have seen, and I'm sure you have read about, commercial traffic through the northern sea route of Russia. It is still at the point where every particular passage is noted, so it's not yet on a regular basis.

The Northwest Passage is seen as probably being the third to open for commercial shipping. As I understand from the Arctic marine shipping assessment, it is not perceived as a high priority for international navigation.

I want to distinguish what I'm talking about here. We're talking about international vessels passing through the area, as opposed to "local traffic" increasing. It's not meant to be a determinant, but it's about where the traffic is coming from, and that it is stopping in Canada to do something and then going away. I understand, from what I have read, that this will increase. We have, of course, seen the proposals for different mines and things like that taking place in the north.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move over now to Mr. Saganash, please, for five minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

First of all, I'd like to thank our two witnesses for their presentations, which were quite relevant.

I would like to make a comment that is intended for Mr. Zebedee, who described the Hon. Leona Aglukkaq as the perfect person. I do not think anyone should describe her like that when we know how the minister handled the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food. Nor would I make such a comment because we also know that, at the international level—as Mr. McDorman pointed out—cooperation and a multilateral effort are required to come to international agreements. That is certainly not the approach that has been adopted.

I also agree with my colleague on the geopolitical importance that this region has taken on in recent years. But when we compare it with the poor infrastructures of that region, it isn't catching up that we need to do. We must seriously wonder if we will eventually catch up. I fully agree with my colleague on that.

My question is for Mr. McDorman.

I listened carefully to your four or five truths. I think that you added a fifth at the end. Mr. McDorman, other instruments of international law have appeared in recent years. I'm thinking of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which also applies in the north, because the people, the first peoples of the circumpolar regions, participated actively in the negotiations for that declaration. Do you think this instrument of international law changes the situation for us in our discussions on the Arctic?

• (1155)

[English]

Prof. Ted McDorman: Thank you very much for the question. I apologize in advance that I'm not going to answer it, partly because it's does not deal directly with international ocean law per se but with the General Assembly's declaration on indigenous rights.

It's hard for me to answer a question as to how that affects the ocean law issues I have talked about. You have had other speakers who are much more familiar with and understand that particular issue better than I do. I'm not going to venture into those waters—no pun intended.

[Translation]

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. McDorman, you are a lawyer. So I am going to call upon your legal knowledge.

We know quite well that, in law, a legal loophole or poor legislation can lead to fairly large legal battles or legal problems. Do you think the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which also applies to part of the Arctic, is a detailed and specific enough tool to deal with all of Canada's priorities?

For example, we are talking about transport in international waters, oil spills, pollution. We know that the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea does not necessarily apply to those areas that do not belong to any state. Do you think that a single international treaty is, in this respect, the only instrument we need to deal with all the problems that will arise because of climate change?

[English]

Prof. Ted McDorman: Fortunately, that is a question I can answer—apparently in a short time.

I don't want to suggest that the law of the sea convention deals with all the issues in the Arctic. In my prepared comments I said that it is a major piece of the international legal structure and framework, but there are of course other conventions. There are Arctic-specific conventions in the areas you talk about—vessel-source pollution, those sort of things. There are the conventions that are done through the International Maritime Organization, including the work being done within that organization on the Polar Code.

Ms. Ève Pécelet: Canada is going to be taking the chair, and there have already been negotiations for a pollution and oil spill treaty and another one for maritime transport. Do you think Canada should push forward these already-negotiated treaties for the international community, so as to have them as a legal background?

For now, there is nothing covering the Arctic specifically. Do you think Canada, as the chair, should push forward these negotiations?

Prof. Ted McDorman: My only comment is that my understanding, as indicated earlier, is that there is a draft text of the agreement on Arctic Ocean oil pollution preparedness and response. So if it is not prepared, adopted, or whatever, I suspect without knowing so that this will be on Canada's Arctic Council agenda. There may be other things that I'm just not aware of which will be Arctic-specific.

But I would say that there is certainly room for Arctic-specific treaties, much as there are specific treaties that deal with the Mediterranean, the North Sea, the South China Sea. There are specific agreements that are regional in orientation; there's no reason that this model can't apply to the Arctic.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That's all the time we have.

I just have one quick question for you, Mr. McDorman.

There has been discussion and we've heard witnesses from non-Arctic states suggest that we should grant some observer status in the Arctic Council. What's your opinion on issues such as that?

Prof. Ted McDorman: Mr. Chair, that's way above my pay grade. That is strictly a policy decision. As a lowly professor from the University of Victoria, which is about as far away from the Arctic as you can get—although the University of Victoria did have the first and only law program set up in Akitsiraq, so that we have some claim to fame—I'm going to respectfully smile.

The Chair: Okay. I thought I'd try.

Thank you very much, gentlemen, for taking the time to be here.

We're going to suspend so that we can set up for the next part of our next meeting.

Thank you very much.

• (1200)

_____ (Pause) _____

• (1200)

The Chair: We're going to get started.

Madame Laverdière, do you have a quick point?

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Yes, a quick point, thank you, Mr. Chair.

It would be extremely interesting for this committee to hear from Minister Aglukkaq, and so I think we should invite her to come and talk to the committee as soon as possible. Therefore, I would ask if you could maybe check with her department, her people, and let us know by next Thursday when she would be available to come to the committee.

The Chair: For her to come possibly after the break week...?

• (1205)

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: That's a possibility. If you could check and let us know...

The Chair: We'll ask the question, sure.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

To our ladies and gentlemen who have joined us from Whitehorse and Yellowknife, thank you for taking the time to be with us today.

We've got, I believe, from the Government of Nunavut, William MacKay, director of intergovernmental relations.

Joining us via video conference from Yellowknife and the Government of the Northwest Territories is Andy Bevan, acting deputy minister, Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations. Mr. Bevan, thank you very much for being here.

We've also got via video conference from Whitehorse and the Government of Yukon, Terry Hayden, acting deputy minister of economic development.

I would just ask you, when you begin your presentations, to introduce the colleagues with you as well.

Why don't we start here in the room with William MacKay?

Sir, welcome, and thank you for being here. We'll turn it over to you for your opening comments.

Mr. William MacKay (Director, Intergovernmental Relations, Government of Nunavut): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the members of the committee.

As the chair mentioned, my name is Bill MacKay. I'm the director of intergovernmental relations for the Government of Nunavut. I'm appearing in response to an invitation to Premier Eva Aariak to appear in front of this committee to address Nunavut's interests and views on Canada's Arctic foreign policy. Although Premier Aariak sends her regrets, she would like to assure the committee that she's been following the study of Canada's Arctic foreign policy closely, and looks forward to the committee's report.

I'd like to take a few minutes this afternoon to outline Nunavut's role in shaping Canada's Arctic foreign policy and to explain to the committee the expectations Nunavut has for the part it might play in Canada's foreign policy in the future. In particular, I would like to address how the territories might play a role in Canada's chairmanship of the Arctic Council, which is coming up in 2013.

Nunavut's active participation in Arctic foreign affairs dates back to 1999, when the territory was created, but the role that territories should play in the circumpolar world was most effectively elucidated in the strategic document entitled *A Northern Vision*, which was released jointly by the three northern premiers in 2007.

My colleagues will probably discuss this as well, but just to give you an overall view of this, *A Northern Vision* included three themes that were important to the people who live in Canada's three territories: first, that sovereignty has a human dimension; second, that climate change is having an impact on the north; and finally and most importantly, in circumpolar relations it is key for Canada to speak with a northern voice. When Canada speaks internationally, it's important that it's speaking for the people who actually live in the north.

In 2010 Canada released its statement on Arctic foreign policy, and that resonates well with those themes. As you've heard from other witnesses to this committee, Canada's Arctic foreign policy statement is intended to project our national interests across all four pillars of the federal government's northern strategy, which I'm sure you've heard of from other witnesses as well.

Today I'd like to focus on Nunavut's interests in three key areas of this statement: exercising Canadian sovereignty, promoting economic and social development in a sustainable manner, and improving and devolving governance.

Mr. Chair, this committee has heard much about the role that international law might have in determining Canada's legal rights in the Arctic Ocean. We heard from Professor McDorman earlier today, and there have been several witnesses who have outlined what Canada's legal rights are over the Arctic Ocean.

I'm here to tell you that the Government of Nunavut strongly supports Canada's assertion that the waters within the baselines and closing the archipelago are part of Canada; as outlined in the Nunavut Act, they are in fact part of Nunavut. However, our focus in circumpolar foreign policy is very much centred on the other two key areas that I mentioned—promoting economic and social development, as well as improving and devolving governance.

This is reflected in our engagement with Canada on its plans for chairmanship of the Arctic Council. It is important to remember that Arctic governance is about more than legal rights over the Arctic Ocean. It is about ensuring that the people in the Arctic have a strong role in decision-making. This is why the Government of Nunavut has been committed to, for example, the implementation of land claims, in particular the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement, and to devolving jurisdiction over land and resource management to territorial governments.

Indeed, it is our assertion that devolving responsibility over governance to the people in the north is a sovereign act in itself that can support Canada's legal claims in the Arctic.

We have also been closely involved in a number of Arctic Council initiatives to ensure that Canada continues to encourage a greater understanding of the human dimension of the Arctic to improve the lives of northerners with our Arctic Council partners.

The work that the council's been doing to address the challenges faced by Arctic communities as a result of increased shipping in the Arctic is also of great interest to Nunavut, given our geographic reality. In particular, we are very interested in any international cooperation that can occur with respect to search and rescue and oil-spill prevention and response.

However, our concern, which was addressed in more detail by my colleague earlier, is that the infrastructure has to be in place to implement these agreements—the agreement on oil-spill pollution response and the agreement on search and rescue. Consequently, our work with the Arctic Council is also focused on the infrastructure piece that they're developing.

Finally, I'd like to highlight the importance to the Government of Nunavut of the Arctic Council's work on climate change. This will also have important consequences for Nunavut.

These are some of the things the Government of Nunavut has been focused on in the Arctic Council recently. We hope to play a more active role in the Arctic Council as Canada takes the chair from 2013 to 2015.

• (1210)

As this committee heard from the federal government earlier on, in October 2012 the theme of the northern chairmanship was announced to be development for the people of the north.

In preparation for Canada's chairmanship of the Arctic Council, the northern premiers have been working together to participate more directly with the federal government in shaping Canada's approach to Arctic Council priorities. The Government of Nunavut has identified our initial thoughts on priorities that relate to the Canadian chairmanship theme and sub-theme, and these are oil-spill prevention and preparedness, which we've mentioned before; Arctic shipping and implementation of the Arctic marine shipping assessment, which you've heard about from other witnesses as well; and finally, a focus on suicide prevention among Arctic people. This priority is very important to Nunavut as our suicide rate is much higher than that of the rest of the country. Suicide is a problem across the circumpolar north, so we are committed to having this be one of the important initiatives of the Canadian chairmanship of the Arctic Council.

The Arctic Council remains the leading intergovernmental forum to discuss and advance the sustainable development of the Arctic. Therefore, the Government of Nunavut is committed to engaging the Government of Canada to ensure that discussions remain relevant to the people of the Arctic.

We look forward to the opportunity the Canadian chairmanship of the Arctic Council presents for Canada to showcase the Arctic to Canadians, our circumpolar neighbours, and the global community. We also look forward to working with our member of Parliament and the minister responsible for the Arctic Council, Leona Aglukkaq, to ensure that Canada continues to speak with a northern voice in its circumpolar relations.

We see this chairmanship as a great opportunity for Nunavummiut to have their voices heard internationally.

Mr. Chair, those are my opening remarks, and after my colleagues have spoken, I'd be happy to take questions from committee members.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. MacKay.

We're going to turn it over to the Government of the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Bevan, welcome. We look forward to hearing your testimony.

Mr. Andy Bevan (Acting Deputy Minister, Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations, Government of the Northwest Territories): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, committee members.

My name is Andy Bevan. I am the acting deputy minister of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations. To my right is Jennifer Dallman-Sanders, our acting director of intergovernmental relations for the same department.

I would just like to start, Mr. Chair, by passing on Premier McLeod's regrets. He would have liked the opportunity to present to the committee today. Unfortunately his legislative assembly commitments did not permit this.

Mr. Chair and committee members, I am pleased to speak with you today to share the views of the Government of the Northwest Territories on Canada's Arctic foreign policy. I should start by first stating that the Government of the Northwest Territories supports Canada's Arctic foreign policy as the international dimension of Canada's northern strategy. Our government's priorities are well aligned with and complement the pillars of the northern strategy and, by extension, Canada's Arctic foreign policy.

While much of what I will be speaking to today is based on our domestic experiences, I speak from the perspective of a government familiar with the challenges being faced throughout the circumpolar world. The GNWT is addressing the impacts of climate change, recognizes the importance of sustainable communities, and is continually working to invest in infrastructure. The GNWT is addressing these challenges alongside our Arctic neighbours. The GNWT believes that, through national and international collaboration and shared innovations, all circumpolar nations can collectively bring greater prosperity to the people of the Arctic.

Canada's upcoming chairpersonship of the Arctic Council presents a unique and exciting opportunity to advance its Arctic foreign policy. This is an important time for northerners, as economic growth and climate change are playing significant roles in the future of the Arctic. It is an opportunity to engage on northern priorities on both the national and international stage and to showcase the immense potential of Canada's north. We are committed to supporting and engaging with Canada during its chairpersonship and have communicated this to Minister Aglukkaq, Minister for the Arctic Council.

With the reality of an ice-free Arctic in the future, issues such as increased northern shipping, Arctic fishing, and interest in offshore development will become important in shaping the Northwest Territories' and Canada's economy. The Arctic Council is a venue to promote collaboration on these and other emerging circumpolar issues.

Recently, Minister Aglukkaq introduced Canada's chairmanship theme of development for people in the north, and the three sub-themes of responsible resource development, safe shipping, and sustainable circumpolar communities. Canada's theme and sub-themes are consistent with our territorial priorities, and the GNWT looks forward to supporting Canada in advancing and achieving our common goals, in turn bringing tangible benefits to the Northwest Territories and to Canada as a whole.

As stated in the Arctic foreign policy, exercising Arctic sovereignty is the first and most important pillar for Canada. Northerners help exercise Canadian sovereignty on a day-to-day basis, through their presence and daily activities. While the population of the Northwest Territories is sparse and spread across 1.3 million square kilometres, our footprint is substantial through travel, hunting, trapping, and mineral exploration; we are often acting as the eyes and ears of the North.

The GNWT shows its support in exercising Canadian Arctic sovereignty by investing in healthy and sustainable communities, where residents continue to live and thrive. The GNWT recognizes that the development of and investment in sustainable community infrastructure is essential to sustainable communities, which in turn are a critical component in achieving Canada's sovereignty objectives.

The Government of the Northwest Territories is also very supportive of advancing the overarching interests of public safety in the Arctic. As the decreasing ice cover leads to increases in shipping, tourism, and economic development in the Arctic Ocean, safe shipping governance and practices become increasingly important. The work of the Arctic Council will not only help to increase public safety but also promote responsible stewardship by reducing the environmental implications of a maritime incident.

The GNWT was also encouraged by the Agreement on Cooperation in Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue in the Arctic, signed at the ministerial meeting in Nuuk in 2011. Arctic search and rescue plays an important role in exercising Arctic sovereignty, yet Canadian search and rescue faces the daunting task of covering an area of 15.5 million square kilometres, with a vast portion of that above the 60th parallel. Presently, when an emergency arises, help must come from as far away as Winnipeg and Trenton. With the recent signing of the agreement, Canada can look to its circumpolar neighbours for assistance in the face of an Arctic crisis, in turn, and they will look to us in international Arctic emergencies.

•(1215)

As shipping, mining, and tourism increase in the Arctic, industry and residents alike will increasingly look to governments for safety assurances in the face of a potential emergency. It is important that governments create an environment of confidence to attract

industry's best and to assure northerners that Canada is able to provide help quickly if needed.

Promoting economic and social development, the second pillar of the Arctic foreign policy, is perhaps the pillar most closely tied to the work of the Government of the Northwest Territories. Domestically, the GNWT is constantly working to build stronger and healthier communities.

Like many of our territorial and circumpolar neighbours, the growth and prosperity of our economy will be based on our natural resource endowment. The Government of the Northwest Territories recognizes the importance of strategic investments in infrastructure to help achieve greater economic and social development. The GNWT is investing in knowledge infrastructure, including geophysical and mapping services to support our mineral exploration and development industry.

The GNWT is also investing in fixed transportation infrastructure such as the Deh Cho Bridge, providing year-round land access between Yellowknife and the south. The GNWT also supports the development of modern communications infrastructure, such as the proposed Mackenzie Valley fibre optic link. This will enhance program and service delivery in northern communities in areas such as telehealth and online learning, and increase scientific research and weather forecasting.

The construction of the Mackenzie Valley Highway to Tuktoyaktuk is another example of a strategic investment in infrastructure that will strengthen and diversify the economy. As the first year-round highway to the Arctic Ocean in Canada, the highway will create employment opportunities, reduce private resource development investment costs, and enable future natural resource exploration, development, and production. It will also improve community access and mobility thereby reinforcing Canadian sovereignty objectives.

To build the territory's future, the GNWT is currently developing strategic policy guidance through a mineral development strategy and a sustainable economic opportunities strategy. These strategies will lead to action plans that ensure we are positioned to guide and manage economic investment and growth in an environmentally sustainable way to build capacity in our communities and self-sufficiency in our people.

Historically, residents of the Northwest Territories have a close connection to the land. It plays an important role in the cultural identity of many Northwest Territories residents and it is one reason why northerners are passionate when it comes to the third pillar of the Arctic foreign policy, protecting the Arctic environment.

Responsible stewardship is an important priority of the territorial government, as the Arctic's delicate ecosystem is already feeling the impacts of environmental change. Temperatures are warming rapidly, coastal communities are facing increased coastal erosion, and the season for winter roads is shortening and becoming less predictable. Additionally, thawing permafrost is compromising transportation, buildings, and other infrastructure, and northern ecosystems are changing rapidly, which in turn is affecting traditional food security for many of our residents and communities.

The GNWT is continually working to contribute and support international efforts to address and adapt to climate change in the Arctic, as well as enhance efforts on pressing environmental issues. We use an eco-based management approach and are actively exploring means of reducing our environmental footprint by increasing our use of renewable energy, which displaces the consumption of fuel, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and increases community sustainability.

In spite of our efforts, the GNWT recognizes that some of the impacts on the Arctic are beyond our control. The GNWT is encouraged by the work of Canada and the members of the Arctic Council to protect the Arctic environment, such as collaboration toward safer shipping practices in Arctic waters and addressing short-lived climate forcers, such as black carbon.

Regarding the Arctic foreign policy's fourth pillar, improving and devolving governance, the Government of the Northwest Territories is committed to negotiating a devolution agreement with respect to land and water that will provide significant benefits to residents. Devolution will mean increased resource revenues in the north, providing opportunities to invest in strategic infrastructure priorities that will promote sustainable development of our economy and create local jobs and business opportunities.

The Government of the Northwest Territories is an active participant in the Canadian Arctic Council Advisory Committee. The GNWT is encouraged by Minister Aglukkaq's willingness to engage with the three territories, providing opportunities to be heard as a subnational government seeking a voice in an international forum.

Mr. Chair, to shift the lens outward once again I would like to return to the impending new reality in the north of an ice-free Arctic.

•(1220)

Arctic shipping, and fishing activities, and increased interest in offshore development will continue to change the economy of the Northwest Territories in Canada. The GNWT is aware of the changing environment and we look forward to working with Canada through its Arctic foreign policy to ensure that we manage and maximize the benefits of the changing north for all northerners and Canadians.

The Government of the Northwest Territories shares many similarities and challenges with our circumpolar neighbours, from sustainable communities and infrastructure to climate change. As a territory we are interested in sharing our innovations with the circumpolar world and learning from others about their innovations. It is through this collaboration and our experiences living and working in the north that the Government of the Northwest

Territories and its residents can help contribute to advance Canada's efforts around its Arctic foreign policy.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Honourable members, I have appreciate the opportunity to speak with the committee today. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bevan.

We're going to move over to Whitehorse in the Yukon.

We have Terry Hayden, the acting deputy minister for economic development.

Mr. Hayden, welcome. We look forward to your testimony.

Mr. Terry Hayden (Acting Deputy Minister, Economic Development, Government of Yukon): Thank you.

Good afternoon. It's with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to speak to you, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Thanks for allowing me this time. Good afternoon also to my fellow representatives from the north.

As you mentioned, I am Terry Hayden, the acting deputy minister of the Department of Economic Development. I'm appearing this afternoon on behalf of the Honourable Currie Dixon, Minister of Economic Development. With me today is Mr. Stephen Rose, the director of policy, planning and research for the Department of Economic Development.

The Government of Yukon believes that developing our northern regional economies is an effective way for Canada to promote its Arctic foreign policy abroad. Canada's north has entered a new era. We are experiencing massive social, political, environmental, and economic change, and with that change comes the opportunity for benefits that reach beyond our northern borders. We are increasingly making decisions that will shape the evolution of the territories in years ahead and create benefits that we can share with all Canadians.

We are mature, responsible governments and believe that our northern institutions—federal, territorial, aboriginal, and municipal—work in partnerships with one another. We see a north where these governments have the fiscal capacity to govern and respond effectively to those we serve.

I would like to begin with Yukon's economic strengths and challenges and Yukon's position with respect to the Government of Canada's Arctic foreign policy.

Yukon's economy remains strong with a commitment by the Government of Yukon to stimulate and diversify the private sector economy. In addition to natural resource development, Yukon is focused on a number of strategic industries including film and sound, research and development, information and communication technologies, tourism, arts and culture, agriculture, forestry, manufacturing, oil and gas, and of course small business development.

To that end it is important that investment is made in infrastructure to create and support immediate stimulus and long-term economic growth. Some of these investments should include building sustainable infrastructure for Yukon communities including water and sewer systems, enhancing our major highways to support the economic future of Yukon's natural resources, and examining the potential for a secondary fibre optic link to the south for enhanced connectivity.

To support Yukon's natural resource development, the Yukon government supports a number of incentive programs. These programs, combined with current geoscience databases and a single regulatory process, have made Yukon a worldwide competitor in investment for the mining sector.

Yukon understands that financing and equity investment from major private sector initiatives will have to come from outside partners, whether from B.C., Alberta, the U.S., the EU, or Asia. Yukon has a strategy of improving the investment climate for responsible development and for pursuing investment attraction from a variety of areas. We already have some substantial capital investment from Chinese companies, and we continue to build our relationship with the Asian region. Yukon's reputation is growing internationally, and we continue to spread the message that Yukon and Canada's north is open for business.

The Government of Yukon places great importance on partnerships with Yukon first nations. We are committed to strengthening and sustaining positive relationships with all Yukon first nations governments, their citizens, and the communities they represent. We believe that it is vital to engage first nations in the development of the north. To date, eleven of the Yukon's fourteen first nations have self-governing agreements in place, and some have already taken advantage of investment opportunities in the various industry sectors in Yukon.

Community participation is critical to ensure that sustainable development can occur with supportive local involvement. Capacity development is a priority for many first nations, and the Government of Yukon continues to work with first nation governments and their respective agents in key areas of capacity development to further participation in the economy.

The Yukon was very pleased when the Government of Canada recognized that Canada's north is a fundamental part of our nation, part of our heritage, our future, and our identity as a country. To Yukon this means that Canada sees and understands the enormous economic potential in Canada's north and is committed to investing further in the resources and the people of the north. Yukon believes that while the economic development needs of Canada's northern regions have similarities, the geographical, political, and economic realities in each of the territories make for very unique and specific situations that should not be ignored. The development of these regional economies is how we manifest Canada's Arctic foreign policy to the world, and the development of Yukon's infrastructure is critical to the expansion of Yukon's economy.

•(1225)

Investment in major infrastructure projects in areas such as roads, energy, and telecommunications must meet the needs of northerners both in the immediate future and the long-term future as Canada's

north grows and evolves. The Government of Yukon recognizes this and is committed to the development of northern infrastructure. For example, we're in the process of establishing a technology and telecom development directive to bring together and focus the Government of Yukon's activities related to the information and communications technology sector and the telecommunications environment. The ICT sector is an important part of Yukon's knowledge economy and one of the sectors that the Government of Yukon is committed to promoting as we pursue economic expansion and diversification. As part of its mandate, the directorate will be undertaking a bankable feasibility study of a redundant fibre optic link to the south, most likely through Juneau, Alaska.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, we believe northern economic development is critical to northern sovereignty and needs considerable and consistent attention. Northern development means actively occupying the north with sustainable, economically thriving communities of healthy, active, community-minded citizens. Sustainable economic development in northern Canada benefits all Canadians.

Thank you.

•(1230)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to start over here with the opposition, with Madame Laverdière on the first round for seven minutes, please.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to all the witnesses for the very interesting presentations.

I would like to start with a couple of questions for Mr. Bevan. You talked a lot about the impact of climate change on erosion and a series of other issues that climate change raises in the north especially. What do you think the council could do, or do more of, with respect to climate change?

I'll make this a double question, because you also spoke about the renewable energies that you are using and developing. So I would like you to develop on that a bit more.

Thank you.

Mr. Andy Bevan: Thank you, Miss Laverdière.

With respect to the first part of the question around climate change, I think, in all fairness, the council is somewhat equipped to have discussions about the circumpolar perspectives of climate change, but there is no doubt that climate change is global and, obviously, at some point others will need to be involved in that dialogue. I don't profess to be an expert on the scientific work that the council has undertaken over the course of the last 10 or 20 years. Certainly, I know that the council does very good work in that regard.

I guess our interests are primarily in work of the council around, more strictly, the environmental research work that it has undertaken. We talked a little bit about the black carbons, etc., and the persistent organic pollutants. So in that regard we obviously support its work and we try to stay as plugged in as possible, Ms. Laverdière, recognizing, of course, that it is primarily a forum for national government.

I apologize, but what was the latter part of your question?

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Maybe I should have been more specific. I was thinking, in particular, about climate change adaptation rather than prevention.

The second part of the question was about renewable energies in the north, if you could expand a bit more on those.

Thank you.

Mr. Andy Bevan: Certainly. On the question of adaptation, again, I'm not sure I have any specific perspectives on exactly what the council could or could not do. But we certainly benefit through our partnership with Canada on programs designed to provide information around adaptation, whether that be base data or the other work that we're doing in partnership with Canada. So again, at the risk of sounding anything other than helpful, I'm not sure I have any particular perspectives on how the council can undertake or wrestle down that work, but I certainly know that Canada and the GNWT have some effective partnerships in that area.

With respect to renewable energy, certainly as a jurisdiction, again, Ms. Laverdière, we are doing everything we can to try to realize and bring to market our significant hydro potential. What we are doing in the interim on a community basis—because obviously there are significant costs associated with bringing some of those world class resources to market—is that we're using a lot of biomass.

We have been very dependent on diesel fuel in our communities, much the same as the other territories to some extent. In fact, some of the communities were almost exclusively reliant on diesel fuels. So any energy or alternative renewable energy sources we can bring to market in those communities helps us just get out of diesel. Biomass is something that we've put a lot of energy and resources into, and we probably consider ourselves a bit of a leader in that regard. Obviously, the uniqueness of the north, the 33 small communities in the NWT, lend themselves to these kinds of programs.

• (1235)

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Thank you.

I will pass it on.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Thanks.

I have a question for all three of you dealing with the permanent participants on the Arctic Council. At various levels there has been a recognition of the limited resources available for participating fully in the Arctic Council. Do you think it should be a priority of Canada to encourage the development of permanent resources to support the permanent participants in the work they do, not only at the meetings but also in-between the meetings in preparing the information and the knowledge that gives them the presence at the table they are looking for?

The question is for all three of you.

The Chair: Mr. MacKay.

Mr. William MacKay: From the Government of Nunavut's point of view, obviously we support the participation of the permanent participants in the Arctic Council. That was a key part of the foundation—

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Speak specifically to the resources.

Mr. William MacKay: Also we support the declarations that the ICC has made with respect to resource development in the north.

That being said, support should also come with some sort of financial support from the federal government. That would be ideal. It's not our decision to make, but we would like to find some solutions so that the permanent participants can make a full contribution to the Arctic Council.

The Chair: Mr. Hayden.

Mr. Terry Hayden: Thank you.

The Government of Yukon as well would support and encourage resources to allow permanent participation. We would recognize that perhaps the discussion would have to be with those who are participating with regard to what those resources might look like.

The Chair: Just a quick response from Mr. Bevan...

Mr. Andy Bevan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Bevington.

Yes, very quickly, the GNWT is very supportive of permanent participants' role in the Arctic Council. We think that is actually one of the unique strengths of the Arctic Council. With respect to resourcing permanent participants internationally or otherwise, we support Canada's position that permanent participants should be sufficiently resourced so that they can engage in it and ensure that their preparations for engagement are effective.

From a territorial perspective, Mr. Bevington, I can certainly articulate the northern premiers' interest in working with the permanent participants and the value they place in that relationship, which features very prominently in their thinking. The northern premiers meet annually with the Canadian representatives of the permanent participants prior to each of the annual northern premiers forums.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to turn it over to the government side.

Mr. Dechert, for seven minutes.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thanks to each of our presenters for sharing all of this important information with us.

Each of you has spoken about economic development. Mr. Hayden said that Canada's north is open for business. I wonder if you could give us your views on whether you think the creation of a formal circumpolar business forum would be useful for showing best practices in economic and resource development in the region. That would be a business council that would be populated by business people from throughout the Arctic region and all the member states of the Arctic Council.

Perhaps we could start with Mr. MacKay. Give me your views on that, and we'll go to each of the other speakers as well.

Mr. William MacKay: There already are interactions between different chambers of commerce in the north on best practices in business development in the north, given the region's particular, unique nature. The more formal structure would probably be useful.

From Nunavut's point of view, we do share best business practices with, for example, Greenland. That's on an ad hoc basis. I think that probably some sort of permanent structure would be useful in terms of economic development.

Mr. Bob Dechert: I'd like to go to each of the others.

• (1240)

The Chair: Mr. Bevan.

Mr. Andy Bevan: Thank you, Mr. Dechert.

I think it would be fair to say that we understand that this is a proposal and something that's supported by Minister Aglukkaq. I don't think I know enough about the proposal at this point in time to state a clear position on it on GNWT's behalf. Having said that, certainly we're looking forward to working with Minister Aglukkaq and her team in developing not only that proposal but also some of the other priorities the minister is proposing that Canada champion during its chairpersonship.

As a general observation, certainly given the importance of economic development and the need for strategic investments in economic development throughout the north, we certainly are always interested in hearing from industry what their needs are and the kind of recommendations they may or may not have on the types of investments required to strengthen our respective economies.

The Chair: Mr. Hayden.

Mr. Terry Hayden: Thank you.

Certainly a circumpolar business forum that presents an opportunity to bring focus and attention to Canada's north would be welcome. As an example, the Yukon currently participates in a Pacific Northwest Economic Region group, consisting of the western provinces, ourselves, the GNWT, and a lot of the Pacific northwest states. We find that it's very helpful to join together as a region and promote ourselves and our current interests in the Pacific northwest. I would see an opportunity to do the same for Canada's north.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Thank you very much.

My next question is for Mr. Hayden.

Mr. Hayden, you mentioned the federal government's policy of recognizing the importance of the north, both as part of Canada's territory and as part of Canada's economic and foreign affairs face to the world.

Could you tell us, in your view, what has been the impact of the change in focus of the federal government towards the north and, of course, the frequent visits of the Prime Minister to the north? What impact would you say that has had on your region?

Mr. Terry Hayden: I would respond from a couple of different perspectives. The Yukon is positioned quite close to the Pacific Rim, so of course we do a lot of international investment attraction. Internationally, there's a strong recognition of Canada's acknowledgement of the importance of the north. As a result of Canada paying attention to the north, other countries have confidence in investing in the north because they know that they're not only dealing with the territory but also that they have the backing of Canada as well.

It's the same thing with regard to those who are already in the Yukon. For instance, with the increased attention that we see from the various visits and the discussions that are taking place from the federal government departments and the elected officials, it brings a confidence to those who are already here to continue to invest and develop their businesses and organizations.

So it's twofold: it brings Canada's north onto a global stage and, in terms of the territory itself, it brings us the confidence to be able to continue to invest over the long term, because we know that we have the support of Canada.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Thank you very much for that.

I have two questions for Mr. Bevan.

Mr. Bevan, you mentioned a very interesting project, the Mackenzie Valley Highway, in your opening remarks. I haven't heard too much about that. I wonder if you could just give us an update on the status of that project and when you expect it to be completed.

Secondly, you mentioned that your government is currently undertaking a mapping of resources within the Northwest Territories. I wonder if you could tell us how that project is being done. We heard from a company that is headquartered in my city of Mississauga, Ontario, a few weeks ago, Gedex Inc., which is using gravity-based mapping technology in aircraft flying over the territories to help map the resources there. Perhaps you could tell us how you're doing it and what the economic benefits of that are to the Northwest Territories.

Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Andy Bevan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Dechert.

With respect to the Mackenzie Valley Highway, the reference I made in my opening remarks was actually a little more specific. It was about a portion of what we hope will be part of the Mackenzie Valley Highway from Tuktoyaktuk all the way down to, obviously, the 60th parallel. Portions of that highway obviously already exist. Portions of it are open on a seasonal basis. Then there are in fact large swaths where there isn't a highway at all to date.

The reference in my opening remarks was to the section of the highway between Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk, which will in fact connect Canada truly from coast to coast, once you take the existing Dempster Highway into consideration. That stretch of road presently doesn't exist, and in fact you're not able to drive to the coast of the Arctic Ocean. That I understand is—

• (1245)

Mr. Bob Dechert: Excuse me, but I just want to ask, for our purposes, what's the distance that needs to be spanned that's not yet completed?

Mr. Andy Bevan: I fear I'm not going to be too, too helpful in that regard. I don't have the specifics at hand, Mr. Dechert. I wouldn't want to mislead you, but I think we're talking in excess, or in the region, of about 150 kilometres. I'd be happy to confirm that for the committee at a future point.

Mr. Bob Dechert: I'm just wondering, Mr. Chair, if he could just briefly address the mapping services of the resources.

The Chair: We're going to have to come back for maybe one quick intervention after Mr. Eyking.

Mr. Eyking, sir, the floor is yours for seven minutes.

Hon. Mark Eyking: Thank you, Chair.

Folks, thank you for coming.

Your three regions represent a vast part of our world, not just of our country. When you look at the size, it's probably the size of Europe and half of Russia together. What happens on this globe in the future is going to have a tremendous impact, and you people all alluded to it.

On the environmental side, many of you already talked about the effect of increased activity, including on the species you have in your regions. We know that the Europeans are very strong on what they are doing regarding climate change. We see from President Obama's state of the union address where he's going in the next four years. He's going to be making his mark on the environment and he's going to be very strong on that.

That being said, I have a concern. We're going to be chairing this council and the next council is going to be chaired by the Americans. Are we maybe being set up here, or could we be in a position where we're going to be wedged, where we might end up being perceived as a little bit hypocritical about our intentions and what we're really trying to do in the north, where these other players might be way ahead of us or pushing for stronger changes on preventing further climate change?

Is there any concern on your part about that, that we might not be going there with strong enough cards, that as the chair we might not be looking at putting forward strong enough proposals on reducing climate change?

Each of you, be quick because I have another question.

The Chair: Mr. MacKay.

Mr. William MacKay: I guess I would just point to the specific projects that the Arctic Council, at least at this point, has in mind. There's the short-lived climate forcers instrument being proposed, which will reduce the amount of carbon going into the atmosphere. I

think Canada is probably going to be a leader in pushing for that instrument.

Then in terms of the other side, adaptation, at least from Nunavut's point of view, that's a key component of the Arctic Council chairmanship. We'd like to see that applied specifically in respect to climate change, which is going to result in more marine traffic in the north and Nunavut. We think that if the Arctic Council chairmanship were focused on implementing the Arctic marine strategic assessment, including pushing for a new polar code at the IMO, it would help Nunavut adapt to climate change.

I take your point that not everything is being addressed, but there are some specific programs that are being proposed at the Arctic Council, which the chair may take on, that will address climate change.

Hon. Mark Eyking: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Bevan.

Mr. Andy Bevan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, honourable member.

I think I would essentially echo my colleague's perspectives from Nunavut. Regarding the work of the council, the politics around the environment globally and internationally are obviously beyond my ability to speak to. But that said, I think there is a strong environmental agenda that can be championed not necessarily only through Canada's chairpersonship, but also through the future chairpersonship of the U.S. I think it's a little less about greenhouse gas reductions and those kinds of environmental policies and positions as it is about stewardship.

I'm not sure if I'm particularly comfortable articulating whether that particular work of the council is strong enough to stand up to international scrutiny, but I certainly believe that the council has undertaken, and has the chance to undertake through the next two chairpersonships, a strong environmental stewardship agenda.

• (1250)

The Chair: Mr. Hayden.

Mr. Terry Hayden: Thank you.

I would reiterate the same thing, that we're not really in a position to comment on whether we need to address it to a greater or lesser degree. I will re-emphasize, as my northern colleagues said, that our focus is on adaptation. We recognize that climate change is happening. We've seen changing temperatures and resulting changes in things like our permafrost, but along with those challenges and the changing temperatures and the permafrost, which is affecting our infrastructure, we believe there also comes an opportunity to do significant research, which we're doing through our cold climate innovation at our Yukon Research Centre, to develop technologies and services that can potentially assist us not only in developing our own businesses and economies but also be marketable to the rest of the world.

Hon. Mark Eyking: Thank you.

My last question is about the Internet. I think that in most Scandinavian countries having everybody hooked up to the Internet is not viewed as an some achievable goal but as a right, and no matter what part of those countries you're in, you have a right to receive Internet. Now, that's a pretty big challenge they're taking on, but they're doing it.

What percentage of your population is hooked up to the Internet, and how does that compare to the rest of Canada?

The Chair: Mr. MacKay.

Mr. William MacKay: I don't know the exact numbers, but I can tell you that there is a greater reliance on slower forms of Internet. There is a fairly high access to the Internet, but the actual technology is not as good as it is in the south. For a lot of people, the speed of access is not as good as it could be, so that's a priority for our government. As I mentioned, I don't have the exact numbers on who has what access, but it's definitely not as good as it is in the south.

Hon. Mark Eyking: Is it mostly dial-up?

The Chair: Mr. Bevan, and then Mr. Hayden.

Mr. Andy Bevan: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and honourable member.

I am unable to give you the specific percentages, but certainly in the Northwest Territories our communities suffer from the speed of access. It's via either via satellite or dial-up, and as practical as this may sound, as a government, when we're contemplating the dissemination of information, we have to factor those kinds of things into consideration, because what people can download and access in a community like Yellowknife, for example, is very different from what they can in our rural and remote communities. So, as I alluded to, we see the proposed Mackenzie Valley fibre optic link project as a priority that we as a government would like to bring to market. Of course, beside our residents, our industry and other public government bodies need better, faster connectivity. So we see it as a key priority.

My apologies, though, honourable member, that I'm not able to identify the particular statistics.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have just a little bit of time left. We're actually over time, but Mr. Hayden, go ahead and answer the question as well, please. Thanks.

Mr. Terry Hayden: The Yukon government has actually paid a lot of attention to Internet, and a while back we undertook a Connect Yukon project. As a result, 98% of our homes can connect to high-speed Internet, if you define it as five megabits per service download. Eighty percent of our homes are actually connected. But what we're finding is that in today's society, five megabits is not nearly fast enough. Our overall goal is to try to ensure that we have capacity, reliability, and affordability as the rest of Canada. Certainly as we see what's commonly available in the south, we're starting to see speeds in major centres of 100 megabits and higher, which certainly would be a goal of the Yukon government. We've often argued to the CRTC that high-speed Internet should actually now be included in the basic service offered, because what we hear back from our citizens is that high-speed access is as important as, if not more important than, traditional telephone service.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to move over to Mr. Dechert.

Do you want to follow up with your question?

• (1255)

Mr. Bob Dechert: Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'll just ask the one question, Mr. Bevan, and then hand over to my colleague, Ms. Grewal.

Mr. Bevan, you were going to tell us a little bit more about the mapping of resources that your government is doing in the Northwest Territories.

Mr. Andy Bevan: Unfortunately, I am not able to speak to that with any precision. Again, I can certainly commit to provide that information to the committee. It's something that resides within the purview of our Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment, and I think I would probably be doing the committee a disservice if I spoke to it in any further detail. My apologies.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Could you supply that information to the committee? It would be much appreciated.

Mr. Andy Bevan: I certainly can, yes.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms. Grewal, go ahead.

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Northerners have contributed greatly to the discussions taking place at the Arctic Council since its beginnings and northerners continue to have an important role in shaping Canadian policy on Arctic issues. Minister Aglukkaq has held multiple round tables with northern community groups and our government is committed to ensuring that northern communities are listened to.

In your opinion, how has this commitment to Canada's Arctic policy helped northern communities?

Any one of you can answer that question.

The Chair: Mr. MacKay, we'll start with you again.

Mr. William MacKay: Obviously, in the Government of Nunavut, we welcome the engagement that Minister Aglukkaq undertook by having her round tables in the north. She also consulted closely with our premier and members of the legislature, so all of the stakeholders had a chance to share their views. We think that the plans of the chair, at least so far as they have been rolled out, reflect a lot of the concerns and interests raised by people—at least in Nunavut.

So from our point of view, our MP has been doing a good job in involving the Nunavummiut in the process. Again, it's early on, but at least at this stage we're fairly happy with the engagement process.

The Chair: Mr. Bevan or Mr. Hayden, do you have any comments?

Mr. Bevan?

Mr. Andy Bevan: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, member Grewal.

Again, I would echo my colleague's perspective in the sense that things are still very early, for sure, but from our perspective in the GNWT we are very encouraged by the minister's openness to communicate regularly. In fact, we're having some discussions as we speak about the potential for some of the Arctic Council meetings, working group or otherwise, to be held in the north, and we feel that's a very important innovation. So the minister's openness to a continued dialogue is something that the GNWT really appreciates. But for us to articulate the particular benefits today, I think we'd probably be getting ahead of ourselves. That said, we're really encouraged broadly by the minister's approach to engaging the territories during the chairpersonship.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll finish with Mr. Hayden, who will have the last comment today.

Mr. Terry Hayden: Again, I would just reiterate that we can't stress enough how important it is to allow the first nations and other citizens of the north as well as the various stakeholders to be able to bring their various views and opinions forward and actively engage in the process and feel engaged in it.

Thank you.

The Chair: To all our guests here today, those by video conference as well as here in the room, thank you very much for taking the time to be here today and contribute to our study.

Once again, thank you very much

With that, the meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of
the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the Parliament of Canada Web Site at the following address: <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Publié en conformité de l'autorité
du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web du Parlement du Canada à l'adresse suivante : <http://www.parl.gc.ca>