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Chair

Mr. Dean Allison

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● (1100)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC)): Good morning, everyone. Welcome. Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), we are continuing our study on Canada's Arctic foreign policy.

I just want to mention that we're going to have bells probably at about 11:20. My suggestion is that we get the opening testimony in and see if we can ask a couple of quick questions and maybe have the committee leave at about 11:30. We'll be about 10 minutes into bells, if that makes sense. That way, we can at least move forward.

I want to just welcome everyone here. We have Danielle Labonté, who is the director general of the northern policy and science integration branch with the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Welcome, Danielle.

We have John Kozij, who is the director of the strategic policy and integration directorate, also with the Department of Indian Affairs. Welcome to you, sir.

From the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, we have Mitch Bloom, who is the vice-president of policy, planning, communications, and northern projects management office.

I'm not going to do much talking. I'm going to leave all of that to you.

Danielle, did you want to start first, then, with your testimony?

Mrs. Danielle Labonté (Director General, Northern Policy and Science Integration Branch, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Sure.

The Chair: We'll go with both testimonies. And as I said, we'll try to at least get a couple of questions in before we have to head out.

So I'll turn the floor over to you.

Mrs. Danielle Labonté: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[*Translation*]

Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to address the committee this morning regarding northern development, using the framework of Canada's Northern Strategy. I will focus on domestic issues and conclude with some brief remarks about our department's role with respect to the Arctic Council.

[*English*]

The northern strategy, as you know, is a whole-of-government effort. It's led by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, and it's advanced by numerous federal departments and agencies. As I speak, I'll refer to examples from many departments today.

The northern strategy is structured around four mutually supporting pillars, shown on the first page of the handout you have before you. It has both domestic and international dimensions and is supported by science and technology. Together these four pillars provide a comprehensive framework for development of Canada's north, to the benefit of northerners and all Canadians.

Under the social and economic development pillar, the aim is to unlock northern economic potential and to work with northerners to build vibrant and healthy northern communities. Canada's north has tremendous resource potential. For example, about 13% of the world's undiscovered oil and 30% of undiscovered gas lie under the Arctic seabed. Fifteen years ago Canada was not a diamond producer, and now we're a global leader. That gives you a sense of the scale of opportunity and how quickly, with the right circumstances, fortunes can change.

To unlock these opportunities, the government has invested in a number of initiatives, including the geomapping for the energy and minerals program at Natural Resources Canada. This supports the development of geoscience maps of Canada's north to help prospectors find energy and minerals.

The government is also committed to streamlining the regulatory process and to having northern regulatory regimes that are more effective and predictable, while safeguarding the environmental health and heritage of the region and providing meaningful aboriginal consultation so we can get northern resource projects up and running.

Skills training is key to ensuring that northerners benefit from these opportunities. There are a number of federal programs that address this issue, including a suite of labour market skills initiatives at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

● (1105)

[*Translation*]

Under the Arctic Sovereignty pillar, the strategy calls for strengthening Canada's arctic presence, advancing our knowledge of the arctic domain, and enhancing our stewardship of the region. For example, the new polar-class icebreaker and arctic offshore patrol ships will increase Canada's capacity to monitor and respond to arctic shipping incidents.

The Environment pillar highlights the importance of protecting fragile arctic ecosystems. Canada is taking a comprehensive approach to the protection of environmentally sensitive lands and waters, through initiatives such as the accelerated clean-up of federal contaminated sites, and the establishment of protected areas.

To address community impacts, programming was launched in 2011 to help Canadians, including northerners, adapt to climate change, and to promote the deployment of clean energy technologies in aboriginal and northern communities.

[*English*]

Under the governance pillar, the government is committed to providing northerners with more control over their economic and political future. This includes advancing the devolution or transfer of land and resource management from the federal level to territorial governments.

This devolution process involves negotiating with territorial governments and aboriginal groups, and it's proceeding across the north at a different pace in each territory. Negotiations toward a final devolution agreement in the Northwest Territories are currently far advanced. An agreement in principle for devolution was signed in 2011, and negotiations toward a final agreement are nearing a successful conclusion.

I'd also like to highlight the foundational role of Arctic science. Complementary to the ongoing programs of several science-based departments, I'd like to especially highlight two new initiatives led by my minister. Firstly, the Canadian High Arctic Research Station will be a year-round facility, in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. It will advance Canada's knowledge of the Arctic in order to improve economic opportunities, environmental stewardship, and the quality of life for northerners and all Canadians.

Second, the Beaufort regional environmental assessment is a four-year partnership that involves federal and territorial governments, Inuvialuit communities, academia, and industry. It was established to develop a knowledge base of scientific and socio-economic information in advance of oil and gas development so as to inform the decision-makers of the region, that is, government, private sector, and citizens.

Both of these initiatives demonstrate that Canada's leadership in Arctic science today will ensure we have the knowledge necessary for sound policy and decision-making in the future.

Finally, I'd like to talk a little about Canada's forthcoming chairmanship of the Arctic Council, which will continue this focus of northern development with the overarching theme of development for the people of the north. Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development has a long history of providing leadership and expertise to the Arctic Council working groups and task forces that produce assessments and develop new instruments for Arctic cooperation.

Our department is the government lead for Arctic Council work in a number of areas, particularly, creating an enabling environment for sustainable oil and gas development in the north, Arctic human development matters, and supporting and advancing aboriginal perspectives of the Arctic Council.

We look forward to continuing to provide significant support when Canada is chair of the council.

[*Translation*]

Thank you for your time.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you, Ms. Labonté.

We're going to now turn it over to Mr. Bloom.

You have 10 minutes, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mitch Bloom (Vice-President, Policy, Planning, Communications and Northern Projects Management Office, Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

Good morning, everyone.

Thank you for the invitation to address the committee on the role the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, or CanNor, as we're generally known, plays in promoting economic development in our north, both domestically and abroad.

Canada is recognized as being blessed with an abundance of natural resources. Nowhere is this defining characteristic more true than in our north. With nearly 40% of our country's land mass, and a coastline that is twice as long as the Atlantic and Pacific coasts combined, Canada's Arctic is a vast and diverse region. This unique environment shapes the cultural, social, and economic well-being of northerners.

As the regional economic development agency for the north, CanNor plays an integral role in advancing the social and economic development pillar of the northern strategy.

● (1110)

[*Translation*]

In Canada's north, natural resources are the primary large scale driver for economic development and employment. The scale of resource development in this region is reaching unprecedented levels. World demand and commodity prices have brought global attention to the north's rich supply of minerals, metals, oil and gas. Emerging markets around the world provide Canada with an opportunity to responsibly develop our natural resources for the benefit of all Canadians.

This interest is also leading to an increase in the number of projects being brought forward for approval. Over the last decade, 10 projects went through environmental assessment—about one a year. At this time, 21 major resource and regional infrastructure projects are in the regulatory process across the three territories, eight are set to potentially enter the environmental assessment phase in the coming 18 months.

Once in production, the 29 projects represent over $23 billion in capital investment, and approximately 10,000 short-term construction jobs and 9,500 long-term operating jobs. With over 150 companies undertaking active exploration across the territories, the number of projects could continue to increase rapidly.

[*English*]

CanNor is proud to count itself among those working toward a strong and dynamic northern economy and to help position the three territories and their peoples to capitalize on this potential.

CanNor has three principal business lines that help drive economic development in the north: one, our northern projects management office; two, contribution programs; and three, conducting research and developing policy to support northern economic development. All these areas are interrelated and must work as a whole for CanNor to achieve its objectives.

First, CanNor is home to the northern projects management office, or NPMO. NPMO acts as a pathfinder, adviser, and problem solver for industry and northern aboriginal communities. We work in partnership with other federal departments, the territorial governments, the project proponents, aboriginal organizations, and other stakeholders to resolve issues so that the regulatory review process is efficient and timely, while at the same time, taking the necessary steps to position Canada's north as a world-class destination for responsible resource development.

[*Translation*]

The Agency has a suite of programs that provide funding to support the development of key economic sectors including mining, tourism, fisheries, cultural industries, and community and business development. A key program is Strategic Investments in Northern Economic Development, which focuses on strengthening these key sectors, promoting economic diversification, and encouraging northerners' participation in the economy.

The success of these economic sectors depends on a labour force with the right skills and training. Improving the quality and effectiveness of skills development and training is critical. In February 2012, the Northern Adult Basic Education Program was launched to help northerners develop the skills needed to enter the labour market or take further vocational training. These programs, along with our Aboriginal Economic Development programs and others, are intended to develop capacity in the northern economy, so that businesses, communities and people can prosper.

[*English*]

Finally, CanNor serves as the federal voice for the north. By building an understanding of the north through our work with our partners and through our policy and research efforts, we promote northern interests both within and outside the federal government—in Ottawa, in the north, and now, to an increasing extent, internationally.

We realize that the economic future of our north, specifically in terms of resource development, is very much a function of actions and activities around the world. The resources of the north serve global markets. Many of the companies advancing these projects are headquartered outside Canada in countries such as the United States, Luxembourg, China, Australia, and Switzerland.

Many of the funds that feed projects and exploration are coming from global capital markets. For these reasons, we believe it is important to position our north as a world-class destination for resource development. As we say, it's a very competitive planet and we need to promote our northern advantage.

We have world-class geology and immense size to go with it. We have a regulatory process that already features one environmental assessment and is being streamlined. We have positive aboriginal relations, many settled land claims, and a readiness to move forward.

We also have federal government commitment and strong partnerships across federal departments with territorial governments as well as with industry and aboriginal communities. Working with our colleagues in the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, we are honing this message and taking it around the world.

This working relationship will further be strengthened by the fact that yesterday, our president, Mr. Patrick Borbey, was named as the chair of the Arctic Council's senior Arctic officials. His northern knowledge and experience will serve Canada well during its chair, particularly given the overall theme of development for the people of the north. All of CanNor looks forward to contributing to this theme in the next two years.

We truly believe that this is the time for Canada's north and for its peoples. We believe that success will be a product of both domestic and international efforts. We are a small and relatively new organization, but one that is prepared to do what is needed to seize this opportunity.

[*Translation*]

Thank you again.

● (1115)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I think what we'll do, since the bells are going to go, as I mentioned, in about five minutes, is try to get one round in of five minutes each. Would that make sense?

An hon. member: Yes.

The Chair: Would that be okay with everybody? We'll go for five minutes, and then all three will get a chance. We'll ask questions into the bells, and that will give us 15 minutes to get back to the House.

All right. We'll start with Mr. Dewar, for five minutes, please.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Thank you, Chair.

And thank to our witnesses, and apologies about the time. There's a time allocation thing going on with the government. They seem to want to curtail time on debates. But anyhow, here we are.

Ms. Labonté, I'll just start with you. One of the things that we're concerned about as a country, and working with our neighbours to the north, is ensuring that we all agree on boundaries, we agree on science. To do that, it's really important to work in a collaborative manner. I'm just wondering if you could tell us what kind of collaboration is going on with some of our partners in other countries in terms of your scientific work.

Mrs. Danielle Labonté: There is a fair amount of collaboration that has been going on in science for many years. It started with the International Polar Year. Canada played a key leadership role in that. We hosted the wrap-up conference. But also one of the files that I'm involved with is the High Arctic research station. We are in the process of developing some MOUs in collaboration with—

Mr. Paul Dewar: With which countries?

Mrs. Danielle Labonté: The U.S. is one that we're working with. Also, we're looking at Germany. Germany has a lot of assets. They have some ships, as well as some other platforms. Those are the most advanced. A number of countries have indicated interest, but they're not as advanced. China and Japan are two, and the European Union.

So there are a number of countries that, now that the funding for the station has been announced, we're in a better place to start having active conversations with. We've learned a lot along the way in the last three or four years from those countries as well, especially those that have assets. In both the Antarctic and the Arctic, we did a lot of benchmarking and have received a lot of useful advice.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Have you taken part in some of the events here in Ottawa with other countries on the Arctic? There have been a whole number of them in the last number of years. Other countries have done forums. I'm thinking of Norway and other countries. Do you participate in those?

Mrs. Danielle Labonté: Yes, we work very closely with the Department of Foreign Affairs and we're involved in the Canada-Norway dialogue. That's one of the ones I can think of off the top of my head. We have an MOU with Russia as well. That's broader than science. It's very multidisciplinary.

Mr. Paul Dewar: You value that opportunity to work with those countries and participate in those?

Mrs. Danielle Labonté: Absolutely, yes.

Mr. Paul Dewar: I say that because we were hoping that we'd actually have representatives from the embassies of those countries here. But sadly the government doesn't want to have them here. I just note that you are involved in that, and I'm glad you are.

Mr. Bloom, if I could, I'll turn to you on unemployment. It's very important for us to see that there is some sort of focus on aboriginal employment. The issue we're dealing with is, of course, the Arctic Council. This is an international forum. What we're wanting to see is that Canada is going to be, as I said to Ms. Labonté, working with others, but a major concern for us is the participation of first nations and aboriginal people, and in the case of the north, the Inuit, in terms of their being able to have a say in how things are developed.

Now, frankly, you're not part of the Foreign Affairs piece, you're part of the—

● (1120)

Mr. Bob Dechert (Mississauga—Erindale, CPC): I have a point of order, Mr. Chair. Unfortunately, I believe, if I'm not mistaken—we'll have to look at the transcript—a few minutes ago I heard Mr. Dewar talk about business that was discussed in camera, in committee business, which I'm told is against the rule.

Mr. Paul Dewar: No, I'm referring to the position of the government. I think we're debating—

The Chair: Okay. All right.

Mr. Bob Dechert: I'd like, Mr. Chair, if you could—

Mr. Paul Dewar: I can reference the conversation I had with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, if you'd like.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Bob Dechert: —look at the transcript and provide us with a ruling on whether Mr. Dewar has breached the rules in that regard.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Sure, no problem. It's actually a conversation that Mr. Dechert and I had with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, which he's referenced before.

The Chair: Go ahead, Paul.

Mr. Paul Dewar: He can play games.

It's the question of participation. What's your plan to get aboriginal people and the Inuit employed in the plans that you're putting forward, and particularly also women?

Mr. Mitch Bloom: It's a great question, and thank you for that.

I'd have to say, since Canada was created we've developed one new program, and it was the northern adult basic education program. I take personal pride in that, because it's foundational. The participants in that program are people who never finished high school. As you know, the high school completion rates in the north are atrocious. Having said that, the education departments of each of the territories know that and are working on that. As I said, being able to bring forward a program that picked up those who've now missed those opportunities—because they're basically passed the stage where they can continue in the secondary system—now they'll be working with the colleges to do that over the next five years. Even that strategy I thought was fairly well thought through, in that we want the colleges to build the capacity to do that. They have a presence in all the communities.

Frankly, once we get out of the three territorial capitals, the aboriginal population is the population. So working with the colleges on the ground in the communities, with programs like this, is a real way to get that foundation done.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We have Mr. Dechert, for five minutes, please.

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

Thank you to the witnesses for being here today.

I'd like to start with Ms. Labonté. You mentioned the potential for increased economic activity in the Arctic region, and Mr. Bloom mentioned 29 projects, I believe, totalling a capital investment of $23 billion. That's a very impressive number. You also mentioned, Ms. Labonté, how important skills training was for the people of the region.

Can you tell us a little bit of what you see has been done up to now in terms of projects in the Arctic, where people obtain skills training through those jobs or through perhaps some programs that your department is offering? Can you give us a sense of whether or not you think, internationally, there are some lessons to be learned from the Canadian experience that could be shared with other members of the Arctic Council?

Mrs. Danielle Labonté: I'm going to ask John Kozij to respond because he's just done some recent work on that.

Mr. John Kozij (Director, Strategic Policy and Integration Directorate, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Thank you.

I used to be a director with HRSDC in the aboriginal skills and development portfolio.

You probably know that this government, through HRSDC, has a suite of different programs and training initiatives both in the north and also across Canada. In a general sense, there are the labour market development programs, LMDAs, as well as the labour market agreements with the territories that deliver skills training. On top of that, you have an aboriginal skills training program, which is called ASETS now. It used to be called the aboriginal human resource development agreements. They are both involved with training populations that may have checkered work histories and things like that, or don't have a range of skills levels.

● (1125)

Mr. Bob Dechert: What are the skills, specifically, that people are being taught?

Mr. John Kozij: It is a wide range of skills. Often those programs respond to client needs. There may be some circumstances, though, where mining companies set up their own training programs for industry-specific skills training. In fact, having self-government agreements widespread in the north as well as land claim agreements in the north gives those aboriginal groups leverage to be able to create what we call impact benefit agreements, which often lead to employment for aboriginal people in specific resource development projects as well as attendant skills training that goes with that.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Do you have knowledge of any of those specific skills training programs offered by the mining companies?

Mr. John Kozij: The Diavik diamond mine does extensive skills training with the Inuit participants as well as with the first nations participants. You'd also see the same in Baker Lake with the Meadowbank mine.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Very good. Have you done any comparison analysis among other Arctic Council nations about the types of skills training they do for the indigenous people of their territory in the Arctic?

Mr. John Kozij: I've looked at it to a certain degree. The indigenous populations in the north are quite different. We share some commonalities with the Inuit in Greenland, for instance, and the Inuit population of Alaska. The indigenous peoples in Russia are probably at a different state. Then the Sami peoples in Nordic countries are at quite a different level in terms of their higher education levels and things like that, which could be actually quite comparable to the Canadian standard.

Mr. Bob Dechert: In terms of Greenland and Alaska, where there are some commonalities, are there similar kinds of skills training programs in place? Do you know?

Mr. John Kozij: I'm not really that familiar with the programs in the United States or Denmark.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Have you or your department had any dealings directly with any of the mining companies that you described, the Diavik mine and the mine in Baker Lake? Was that done directly between—

Mr. John Kozij: As I mentioned before, when you talk about impact benefit agreements, they are actually private contracts between the company and, in this case, the Inuit beneficiary in the circumstance of the Meadowbank mine in Baker Lake. Those are private agreements, not disclosed.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Well, I appreciate that.

I wanted to go to Mr. Bloom and ask him to give us just a brief overview of some of those 29 projects he mentioned.

Mr. Mitch Bloom: It's fascinating. In the north you get to the number of $23 billion because the size of the projects is so large. You simply cannot advance a project in the north unless it has significant size because of the cost of getting there. There's a lack of infrastructure. So that critical mass generally brings you between a $1 billion and $6 billion project. As we like to say, it's generally a large infrastructure project with a hole at the end of it, which is the mine or the oil and gas site, or things like that. They are quite large in scale and scope, and they're at every spot in the north. We share maps with a lot of our clients and we have dots on all of these projects. And Yukon, the NWT, and Nunavut all have these major projects that are coming through. Some of them are brand new projects of grand proportions, like the Baffinland iron ore mine, which has been known for 60 years and has now reached the point where it's ready to go. There's also a bit of a pattern that's developing where, through technology, some older mines, especially some older gold mines in the Yukon, are now able to come back on stream.

I had a fascinating meeting this week with a company that operates a tungsten mine in the Yukon. Through technology, they're actually able to go to an old mine and get a better ore output than they do from new mines in other parts of the world.

All this to say, they are at all different points and all different shapes and sizes.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I will finish up with Mr. Eyking, for five minutes, please.

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Thank you, Chair. Thanks, folks, for coming.

Recently a couple of articles came out. One was in *The Globe and Mail* the other day about how the activity up north, especially shipping and, as you mentioned, the mining and extracting industries, is going to really escalate. Also, there was an article in the last few days in *The Economist* on how the wildlife is going to change. Species of fish are going to leave an area and go to a totally different area, and the same with mammals and birds. There's going to be a whole shift. Then of course, you realize that the living conditions of people living up north are going to change. There are going to be challenges with the permafrost.

That being said, your two departments are going to be key on how we as Canadians, or the people in the north in particular, are going to adapt over the next few decades. My first question is, are you going to need more money for all the challenges you people are going to face in the next few decades? Also, do we need a change in the mandates of your departments? Do you need a change in how you operate, with the challenges and priorities that are going to be up there? That's a question for both of you.

Mr. Mitch Bloom: I'll try first.

The north is changing, and that's going to require an immense government effort. We try to do two things in CanNor. One is to establish how much money we are spending up there as a federal government—and they're immense dollars right now. The other thing is to develop those partnerships.

When I said that there is $23 billion of infrastructure going up, that's private sector money. That's not government money doing that. If you're able to work with territorial governments, if you're able to work with the private sector, if you're able to work with the aboriginal communities, there's a lot there to work with. I think the magic is going to be, for us—and I think this is speaking to your point on mandate—the ability to get those people to work together, to sequence and align their efforts in the right order so that we're doing the right thing.

That's why I use the adult basic education program. If somebody can't read a safety sign at a mine site, there's no job there for them, so you have to start at the base and then do these things in the right order, and make sure we're not duplicating and overlapping. I don't think there's a lot of that going on, but at the same time, I think we can work better together as partners. I spend a lot of time travelling from place to place, getting folks to work together. I think that's the key.

● (1130)

Mrs. Danielle Labonté: I wouldn't want to presume that we'll be asking for more money in the future. I think the mandate that the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development has is quite broad, and there's a lot of opportunity to re-calibrate within that mandate as priorities change or issues come up.

One of the big drivers of what we will look like in the future within our organization is the post-devolution world, I guess. We are getting close to an agreement with the Northwest Territories, and we will be transferring some of our responsibilities and our staff who go with that, and we'll eventually do the same with Nunavut. There will always remain a core northern affairs unless, at some point, there's a machinery discussion, which is well beyond my ability to comment on. We would still have a role in overall coordination and playing into the Arctic Council sphere.

Concerning wildlife and the changing north, some of the issues you raised very much play into some of the key science work that's going on in the various working groups and task forces of the Arctic Council, in terms of adaptation. The science is trying to respond to those emerging trends.

Hon. Mark Eyking: We already had Transport in here and Defence here a bit. I see DFO having to play a major role up there, and we haven't had them here yet. In Atlantic Canada, DFO works with ACOA, so everybody has to work together on the whole thing. How much are you going to do? What are you going to do with DFO, dealing with the fish species and the mammals, if there's going to be a major shift going on here? With the increased traffic and with other countries thinking that they can fish, how are you going to play a role with DFO on the whole economic part of that?

Mr. Mitch Bloom: Certainly, from our perspective—

The Chair: Mr. Bloom, there's time to answer the question, but that's all the time you have, Mark. Just go ahead and answer the question. Thanks.

Mr. Mitch Bloom: Thank you. I'll be brief, Mr. Chair.

DFO does a great job of managing our international relations, with fish management agreements that cover the planet, effectively. They're really, really onto that.

From an economic development perspective, those projects have an impact on fish and fish environment. We work very closely with DFO to make sure we're getting the right environmental outcomes. As those projects go forward, they're part of the environmental assessment process.

Fisheries themselves are interesting. There are active, growing fisheries, especially in Nunavut, and that's wonderful. It will be interesting to watch that in the years ahead.

The Chair: Go ahead, Ms. Labonté, very quickly.

Mrs. Danielle Labonté: Mr. Chairman, if I could just add that the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs has a champion role in terms of the northern strategy, and we do have a governance table at the deputy minister and ADM levels that tries to do that coordination across government, and DFO is part of that. As that becomes an issue, this will be something that will definitely be considered within the northern strategy as well.

The Chair: Thank you.

To our witnesses, thank you very much. I'm sorry we couldn't be here for the full hour. We appreciate the testimony and a quick round. Thank you.

Just before we suspend, I have a motion that the necessary arrangements be made and the necessary funds be allocated to the committee's hospitality budget for an informal meeting and lunch with Dr. Andrei Lankov, associate professor at Kookmin University on March 25.

(Motion agreed to)

The Chair: Thank you so much.

We're suspended. We'll come back here after a vote, which I'm thinking will probably be at least ten minutes after the hour. Thank you.

● (1130)

(Pause)

● (1215)

The Chair: We'll get back now. Thank you very much to our witnesses for being patient and flexible with us, as we had a couple of votes this morning.

Here, joining us in Ottawa, we have, from the Students On Ice Foundation, Geoff Green, who is the founder and executive director. Welcome, Geoff. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Then via teleconference from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, we have Greg Poelzer, who's the director, International Centre for Northern Governance and Development, University of Saskatchewan. Greg, welcome, via phone. How are you today, sir?

Prof. Greg Poelzer (Director, International Centre for Northern Governance and Development, University of Saskatchewan, As an Individual): Tremendous. Thanks very kindly.

The Chair: Excellent.

Greg, why don't we start with your testimony and then we'll move over to Geoff for his testimony?

So, Greg, you have the floor for 10 minutes, and we look forward to hearing your testimony.

Prof. Greg Poelzer: You bet, and thanks for the opportunity to present.

There are three parts to the presentation that I want to provide today. One is just putting some context around the north and Canada's northern or Arctic foreign policy. Second, I want to identify two particular areas that I think would be worthwhile for the Canadian government to focus on. The last part is to look at a couple of challenges I think Canada confronts around building knowledge and support around Canada's Arctic foreign policy.

First, and I'm stealing a bit from the title of a book that I thought was a very thoughtful one by Laurence C. Smith, *The World in 2050*, and looking at northern futures in a circumpolar context, of course Canada is one of the major players, the second largest after Russia. There are four areas that are going to frame and shape the future of the north, particularly international relations in the north.

One, of course, is globalization and the increased interaction globally and interest in the north, but also among the Arctic partners themselves. Really over the last 25 years it has accelerated in the circumpolar north.

The second, of course, is natural resources and the demand for natural resources, which are abundant in the circumpolar region. It's no secret to anyone here that this demand is only going to increase, driven by a third factor, which of course is demographic changes. The demographic change in areas such as India, China, and Brazil, and so on, in those humming economies, is going to put further pressure on resource demand, not only as their economies grow but actually as their populations grow as well.

Climate change is also a very important factor, and everyone knows potentially for transportation, shipping...though less likely a factor for Canada, but destination shipping certainly will be.

The last, the fifth, would be in the area of governance, particularly around devolution, the increasing illegal regime in the north, and around aboriginal rights and the empowerment of aboriginal peoples, not only in Canada but in other circumpolar countries.

Those factors are going to play a significant role in the nature and context of circumpolar relations and how we should look at Canadian Arctic foreign policy and northern policy. I'm sure the committee has heard many things in repeating patterns on what Canada ought to do, but I want to bring in two in particular that may have less attention than what conventionally gets brought forward. One is the need to bring in the provincial north, and the second is to establish greater leadership and capacity building.

On the first one, the provincial north, one of the challenges that comes up in Arctic Council, comes up in other circumpolar Arctic foreign policy discussions, is that the provincial north is almost always excluded or not included in considerations of Canada's northern or Arctic policy, and really I think that's to the detriment of Canada. It's certainly detrimental to northerners. If you look at the provincial north, we're looking at about 1.5 million people, whether they are in northern British Columbia, northern Ontario, northern Quebec, Labrador. That region contains most of Canada's natural resource wealth. Linking that with the territorial north, I think, is critically important as we move forward in the 21st century in defining Canada's northern foreign policy.

There is a natural community of interest between residents of the provincial and territorial north, everything from the climate to the bio-environment, the economies, and demographics. Just to point out one example, northern Saskatchewan, the northern administrative district, which is roughly half the territory of the province of Saskatchewan, has a higher aboriginal population as a percentage than does the territory of Nunavut.

The second area is in terms of leadership and capacity building.

● (1220)

It is probably well known to members of the committee that Canada is the only country of the Arctic eight that doesn't have a university in its Arctic region, so that focus on education is important. There's been a greater focus on research, but I think it's important to bring in the circumpolar and, as a dimension of our foreign policy, build those education and research linkages.

But I wouldn't stop there in terms of establishing leadership and capacity building. It's more than training and research or education and research. It also means we are building stronger businesses, business linkages, economic linkages, and government linkages, particularly municipal, first nations, Métis, and Inuit organizations and governments, and obviously territorial and provincial north government organizations.

Where there's been success, especially in the Barents region, in terms of building economic and governance capacity, there's been considerable effort placed by those governments, as part of their foreign policies, on business-government linkages and building capacity in the north.

One other area that's worthy of consideration is military investment and greater military investment in our Canadian north. If you look in comparison to other regions, such as Alaska, northern Norway, northern Sweden, the investments in military facilities, for instance, have had very important civilian spinoffs, in everything from telecommunications to research capacity and so forth. The University of Alaska Fairbanks would not be the world-class research institution in geophysics, environmental research, and so on were it not for the investments around the U.S. military. I think that's really important to state.

In northern Norway, for example, not only is there northern air command, but the national air command is based in Bodø, Norway. Again, that creates a hub of activity and resources that help northern regions in terms of economic opportunities, capacity building, communications and so forth.

A final dimension that I want to bring to the presentation is about the challenges for building Canadian support around our northern policy and interest in engagement. The reality is that Canada, for the most part, is a southern country in terms of its population, though certainly not in terms of its geographic land mass. Most of the population, as is well known, lives within a couple hundred kilometres of the United States border.

There are two other demographic changes that I think present a challenge for Canada. Number one is the number of intergenerational urban Canadians. If we look at 30 years ago, most Canadians either came from a rural area or had relatives living in a rural area. The natural connection to northern, rural, and aboriginal issues was certainly much stronger then. What we've had over the last 30 years is a shift. You have intergenerational urban Canadians, and there aren't the natural linkages to the rural areas, or to the north or aboriginal issues. I think that plays heavily, to our detriment, in terms of the connection to the importance of Canada's northern foreign policy.

The second demographic change is new Canadians. New Canadians are critically important to the past, present, and future of Canada. Culturally, economically, and so forth, new Canadians bring a vitality to the country. Most new Canadians settle in urban areas. Half of those people in Canada's largest city were not born in Canada. Just as with intergenerational urban Canadians, there isn't a natural connection to rural Canada, northern Canada, or aboriginal Canada.

In terms of garnering greater support and interest—because it's in Canada's interest to be engaged in our northern foreign policy—I think those two demographics need to be addressed in a systematic way. If we add that to the emphasis on leadership and capacity building in the fullest dimension, as well as a very concerted and explicit effort to include the provincial north in Canada's foreign policy, I think those would be worthwhile considerations as Canada moves forward.

Thank you.

● (1225)

The Chair: Thank you very much, Greg.

We will move to Geoff Green now.

We'll take his presentation, and then we'll follow with questions for the remaining 30 or so minutes.

Mr. Green, I turn the floor over to you.

Mr. Geoff Green (Founder and Executive Directeur, Students on Ice Foundation): Thank you, Chair. *Bonjour*, everyone. Thank you for the invitation and opportunity to speak today. I really appreciate it.

[*Translation*]

I want to apologize for not speaking French today.

[*English*]

I first went to the Arctic in 1994 on an expedition to the top of Ellesmere Island. Little did I know at the time that this first Arctic journey would be one of the turns in my life's path and an experience that would go on to define my career and, really, my life in many ways. Soon after it led me to the Antarctic. Someone figured that, since I'd been to the Arctic, I must know something about the Antarctic, so I agreed with them. In reality I barely knew the difference between a polar bear and a penguin, but away I went.

In the two decades since, I've had the great fortune to lead over 80 expeditions to the Antarctic and 40-odd expeditions and projects throughout the circumpolar Arctic. I've sailed through the Northwest Passage three times, stood on the tops of remote mountains and glaciers, and looked into the eyes of polar bears and bowhead whales. I've listened to and learned from Inuit elders, participated in scientific research, and witnessed firsthand the impacts of climate change, including being stuck up to my knees in melting permafrost. I've walked into the depths of one of the first mining operations in the Canadian Arctic and I've had very emotional conversations with Inuit youth about why suicide should not be considered an option. From the pure awe and wonder of the land to the traditional knowledge and remarkable resiliency of the Inuit, the Arctic has cast a spell on me like it has on so many others.

My Inuktitut name is Pitsiulak, which was given to me by Ann Hanson, the commissioner of Nunavut at the time. A pitsiulak is a black guillemot, a small Arctic bird with bright red feet. It's also in the name of Peter Pitsiulak who was a great educator and artist from Cape Dorset. The school in Cape Dorset is named after Peter. That name has come to mean a lot of things to me but is mostly a reinforcement of my connection to our north and its people.

I've come to appreciate and understand how the polar regions truly are the cornerstones of our global ecosystem and how everything is interconnected in between. Like the battery in your car, if the two poles are not connected, your car doesn't start. The polar regions of our planet are critical to the way the oceans circulate, the stability of our climate, and, really, to life on earth as we know it and enjoy it. In this way and many others, the Arctic and the Antarctic are windows to our world. They're remarkable symbols of peace and understanding and of collaboration and conservation.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that Canada remains a non-consultative member of the Antarctic Treaty. Becoming a full member of the Antarctic Treaty would be warmly welcomed on the international stage and would certainly serve to strengthen our position as a great polar nation and add weight to our Arctic foreign policy at very little cost.

The Canadian Arctic is so many things. It is our biggest coastline that links our nation from sea to sea to sea and represents 40% of our land mass. I love the idea of changing our national motto to include the Arctic Ocean: A Mari usque ad Mare usque ad Mare. Wouldn't that be a profound way to help celebrate Canada's upcoming sesquicentennial in 2017?

The Arctic is a huge part of Canadian identity. We are a polar nation. We would be very different as a nation and a people if it were not for this vast land and ocean stretching above us all the way to the North Pole. As Bernie Funston likes to say, and I know he presented to you recently, the Arctic is a “homeland, a frontier, a laboratory and a wilderness”. I'd like to add to that list because I believe it is also the world's greatest classroom.

In 1999, I founded Students on Ice, a program to take youth from across Canada and around the world on educational expeditions to the Arctic and the Antarctic. In the last 13 years we've taken over 2,000 students from 52 countries on these journeys; secondary and post-secondary students from every province and territory in Canada, including hundreds of northern aboriginal youth from the Yukon to Nunatsiavut. We've also had students from countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, Russia, New Zealand, Chile, South Africa, China, India, Israel, and Palestine.

● (1230)

On each ship-based expedition, the students travel with world-class teams of educators, elders, scientists, experts, artists, musicians, and leaders of all stripes—even politicians. Today, I'd like to invite all of you to join us on a future Arctic expedition. The next one is in July.

We've worked closely with members of Parliament, senators, congressmen and congresswomen, premiers, presidents, and even princes. Prince Albert II of Monaco is the honorary chair of my board of advisers.

Together with these partners, we're active in all kinds of related global educational initiatives. We reach hundreds of thousands of youth each year through conferences, new media, and different activities. Our growing alumni and alumni program are really well positioned to champion Arctic Council initiatives that respond to the needs of northern Canadians and connect the themes of Canada's Arctic Council chairmanship, Canada's Arctic foreign policy, and northern strategy objectives.

We possess, together with these students, a unique convening power to bring together many diverse stakeholders on Arctic issues. The impact and outcomes on the students, as you can imagine, are diverse, quite extraordinary, and quite inspiring, from personal levels to becoming Arctic ambassadors, by sharing their experiences with their communities back home, and in many cases representing Canada on an international stage. Most recently, some of the alumni tabled the International Youth Arctic Declaration at the senior Arctic officials' meeting of the Arctic Council in Luleå, Sweden.

All the students are fully supported by scholarships via our Students on Ice Foundation, and that's thanks to generous support from private and public sector partners. I can safely say that if not for Canada, Students on Ice would not exist, and we've been blessed to work with all kinds of government departments from INAC, Heritage, Environment, DFAIT, Canadian Wildlife Service, Parks Canada, and the list goes on. We are also quite involved in the International Polar Year, and the Canadian Museum of Nature is our biggest partner.

I want to commend this committee for the important and timely initiative that you're taking on. There's a perfect storm of governance challenges and opportunities that face the Canadian government with respect to the Arctic region. Canada's upcoming chairmanship of the Arctic Council puts us in a great position to lead, to show Canadians in the world why we are a great polar nation, and to make the decisions that we can be proud of and that will benefit generations to come.

I would also like to urge the committee to take a long-term view of international sustainable development in the Arctic. I strongly support the ecosystem-based managed and balanced approach to economic development and protecting the environment in the Arctic, as stated in the foreign policy. We must keep in mind at all times that good human industrial activities can have unintended effects. A recent example is about how narwhal whales migrating out of summer feeding grounds in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago into Baffin Bay were turned back by seismic exploration. The whales of course use echolocation in a quiet ocean to hunt and navigate. They became trapped at breathing holes in the channels of the islands until it was too late for them to reach open water, when the holes froze up. They starved, and they died.

In 2008, about 1,000 trapped narwhals were counted near Pond Inlet. This kind of problem will likely increase as industrial activity increases, unless it's mitigated and studied properly. Certainly, the petroleum exploration people never intended to kill thousands of whales several hundred kilometres distant from their operations. It shows how in the Arctic, all activities, both human and natural, are connected. Even short-term activities can have long-term impacts.

Canada has identified environmental stewardship as being central to the sustainable development of the natural resources in the north, and that's great. Achieving this will require building leadership in the north and proving the capacity of northern communities to respond to the challenges and opportunities, especially due to the result of climate change.

I'd like to focus my remaining comments on the important role education will play in all of this, because it's truly fundamental. Broadly speaking, there are two main areas of education in dire need of improvement vis-à-vis the Arctic: education in the north for northerners and northern youth, and public education in the south about the north.

Across the Arctic, there are children and youth full of curiosity, hope, and dreams, and some amazing young emerging leaders, whom we should be proud of.

● (1235)

But too many of these youth are struggling, to put it mildly. I'm sure you're aware of the appalling statistics and circumstances: 75% of Inuit youth are not graduating from high school; many don't attend school; and 56% of the Inuit population are under the age of 25. It is a bit of a recipe for disaster. That's why it's such an urgent issue. And of course this educational disparity between non-aboriginal and aboriginal Canadians exists across the country; it's one of our greatest challenges.

What does improving education in the north mean? It's not just a matter of implementing new systems and curriculum. Improving this situation is intrinsically linked to some very basic needs, such as for adequate housing infrastructure. Sustainable, healthy, prosperous, and well-educated northern communities must be a pillar and priority in our Arctic policies.

Initiatives such as the 2011 national strategy on Inuit education, the Nunavut Sivuniksavut program here in Ottawa, the Nunavut Arctic College, and the new Amaujaq National Centre for Inuit Education are doing great work in this area and deserve more support.

With regard to public education and understanding about the Arctic for southern Canadians, there remains a remarkable void and disconnect. As an anecdotal example, during a recent workshop that my team was giving at one of Canada's teachers' colleges, the question was asked, how many of you learned about the Arctic in school? Not one of the teachers raised a hand. As a polar nation, we still have very little Arctic-related curriculum in our mainstream education systems. We need to change this.

Canada can and should be a leader in Arctic education. Our youth love to learn about the Arctic—its history, culture, flora, fauna, sciences, the contemporary issues facing the Arctic. As a platform for education I've never seen anything that comes close to the Arctic. Filling this void is also about bridging north and south, building trust and understanding, breaking down the misconceptions and stereotypes. It's also about preparing our youth in the best possible way for the future. We must take on this active role on so many levels.

With regard to climate change, from an educator's point of view it is our responsibility to help prepare this next generation for the kind of world they'll be living in as adults. During one of my many polar journeys with Dr. Fred Roots, one of our country's legendary polar statesmen, he said to us:

> To pass a torch in civilization, just as in a relay race, the person you are passing it to has to be ready to take it or else it will get dropped. It is the duty of all of us to say enough about what kind of a race we are in, and what are the rules of that race, before we pass the torch.

As an aside, Dr. Roots dropped a flagpole on the North Pole in 1969, well before our Russian neighbours did in 2007. However, when he dropped the flagpole, it had all the flags of the United Nations on it. It's still there today; what a remarkable gesture—much more symbolic and appropriate.

To conclude, there are four education-related projects I wish to share with you that I think would be wonderful ways to showcase and build on Canada's arctic foreign policy, northern strategy, and chairmanship.

The first is Polar House, or Arctic House, a national centre to raise awareness about and to celebrate the past, present, and future of the Arctic.

The concept of a national centre to support Canada's Arctic is not new. In 1987, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs published the report *Canada and Polar Science*. One of its chief recommendations was the establishment of a polar house or Arctic house.

I worked quite a lot on this throughout the IPY, and there is a full business plan that I'd be happy to share with any of you. It would support Canada's Arctic foreign policy by building public support for the exercise of Canadian sovereignty, a platform for policy, technical dialogue, education, social and economic development, environmental protection, and on and on it goes.

Other countries, such as Norway, Russia, and New Zealand, have polar houses, and I think Canada deserves a polar house. I even have a location, if you're interested.

● (1240)

The second project is the creation of a global, unique polar or Arctic school, an international, semester-based school based in the capital region that would draw youth from across Canada and around the world to study Arctic issues, build knowledge and capacity, and have a field school component whereby students then participate as interns in scientific, northern community-based development projects and expeditions in the Arctic. A broad range of partnerships would make this a global, unique, Canadian initiative.

The third is the establishment of an ongoing Youth Arctic Council, a parallel organization. Our youth represent the true sustainable future of the Arctic. Engaging them at an early stage in the workings of the Arctic Council would empower them to act as champions and catalysts, which would assist and actually feed the real Arctic Council with vision, ideas, and strategic planning. They could probably talk as well about things that the real Arctic Council can't talk about. This Youth Arctic Council could meet both physically and virtually, and it could be a great outcome of our chairmanship.

Lastly is the virtual Arctic project, for which we're already working on phase one, in partnership with the Museum of Nature and Heritage Canada. It's an educational resource for Canadian youth from coast to coast to coast, and it is a project that will go a long way to fill that void of Arctic curriculum in Canada.

Merci beaucoup.

I look forward to any questions and to helping make these initiatives and others a reality in the future.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Green.

We're going to start with Mr. Bevington for six minutes.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I heard most of what has been said here by the two witnesses and I try to glean from it the difference between national policy and international policy, which at foreign affairs is our emphasis. Of course the discussion about the Arctic Council is definitely in the purview of international affairs.

Right now, the minister has indicated, the broad theme of the Canadian chairmanship will be economic development, resource development, development of the north. Over the past seven years, the collaborative efforts of Arctic nations on the Arctic Council has been on environment, to the greatest extent: to deal with the most pressing issues that internationally affect the Arctic; to look at ways whereby international agreements can be struck to protect the Arctic; to deal with the changing conditions of the Arctic.

My concern, and I want both of you to address it, is whether, if we focus on national issues at the Arctic Council, we will lose the impetus that has been placed within the Arctic Council to this point on developing international agreements to protect the Arctic and to deal with the changing conditions of the Arctic.

Mr. Poelzer, perhaps you could go first.

● (1245)

Prof. Greg Poelzer: To me, these are very much two sides of the one coin. Even if you look at what the Arctic Council has worked on—and there has been a heavy emphasis on environmental issues, and rightly so—their work has also been in the context of oil and gas guidelines and so on. That's a reality in terms of resource development in the north, whether it's between Norway and Russia or for everything from fisheries to oil and gas off Greenland and in our own Arctic region. Addressing both together is critically important; it's not simply one or the other.

So I agree that there needs to be emphasis on environment, but equally there needs to be attention to economic and resource development. A lot of this has international implications. I point of course to Norway and Russia, which have engaged in a lot of discussion, but it also involves our own Arctic, particularly in the Beaufort and between Canada and the United States.

I see those two things as two sides of one coin.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: But those two agreements were worked out outside the Arctic Council; those were worked out between countries that had specific economic interests in those areas. Is that not correct?

Prof. Greg Poelzer: In those particular instances it absolutely is correct. But things such as oil and gas recommendations—

Mr. Dennis Bevington: I'll get Mr. Green to answer now, because there isn't much time here.

Mr. Geoff Green: I'm not an Arctic Council expert. I'm the facilitator. But I think they are interconnected, the domestic and the foreign nature of the Arctic Council. I think we need to be careful during our chairmanship not to have too much of a domestic agenda because it is clearly an international body.

The relationship between the environmental aspects of the council's work and the economic—it's so interconnected. The reason why, as we know, things are ramping up and more and more development is happening is a direct result of the sea ice melting, and so it has to be a balanced approach. As an add-on to that, we shouldn't rush into these issues at all. We need to take our time.

An Inuit elder said to me the other day that when they hunt caribou, they let the first of the caribou go by and then they wait and they wait, and then they shoot the caribou near the end. They don't jump at the first opportunities. I think we need to take that approach with the way we develop the Arctic.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: And of course with fishing right now, wouldn't you say that with that resource in particular, as there is no fishing going on there right now, this is the time to establish international agreements that can guide any potential development of that resource and also ensure that resource is well protected? If you don't do it now, you may lose the opportunity to do it at all.

Mr. Geoff Green: It's probably the best example. It's the last really great fishery on the planet and we have a remarkable opportunity to learn from past mistakes and develop a fishery that will be sustainable and long-lasting. I think it's probably the best example we have that is quite achievable.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're going to move over to Ms. Brown now, for six minutes.

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to both of our witnesses today. This has been a most interesting project for us at the foreign affairs committee, so thank you for your involvement.

Mr. Poelzer, I'm really pleased to hear you talk about those two areas. You said that we need to bring in the provincial north and we need to strengthen capacity building. I'm sure you're aware that both of those are under our northern strategy. We heard earlier today from Danielle Labonté, who is the director general for northern policy and science integration, and she talked about that—I'm reading from her script—"...the Government of Canada is committed to providing northerners with more control over their economic and political future". So we know that there is a great need to give them more autonomy, as it were.

We also heard from Mitch Bloom, who told us that there is a great initiative there in starting to do skills development with the colleges. Yes, we know there isn't a university there yet, but the critical piece is to get so many of these young people to finish high school, which is an important part of the steps that we need to go forward.

I think, Mr. Green, you were talking about having the long-term view as well, and saying that we have to get the first steps right.

I'm very interested in pursuing this piece on education that you're talking about. As a teenager my parents offered each of their eight children the opportunity for a trip somewhere in the world for our 16th birthday present. I went with an organization called Ship's School Association, which provided us with learning opportunities as well as site visits. I chose the Orient. Two of my sisters chose Europe. One of my brothers chose South America. So we all went to different places but had the same kind of experience, where the education component firmly embedded in us the understanding of culture and industry and environment.

So I'd like you to talk a little bit more about what this polar school looks like. Are you seeing this as a Canadian institution? Or is there room for international involvement and it just happens to be housed in Canada? What's your view on that?

My daughter is a grade 3-4 teacher and she has just finished teaching a whole section on Arctic studies because of our taking the Arctic Council, and you're right, there's no curriculum. Is there room as well for your students who have gone on these expeditions to start creating curriculum that can be used in our public school system? Those are a lot of questions, I'm sorry.

● (1250)

Mr. Geoff Green: They're great questions. Certainly the formative years are that time where we can really define our youth and their perspectives and their futures, which is why I think all of us can point to things that happened to us in those years that led us to where we are today.

Polar school definitely would be international. Probably the best model out there would be like a United World College, or Pearson College, but with a focus and emphasis on the Arctic— funded, scholarship-based, 50 to 100 students. There's actually a property on Meech Lake that belongs to the NCC that we've looked at as a potential location, O'Brien House, the old government conference centre, which is sitting empty now.

In terms of the youth, absolutely, the youth go back, they help to educate their peers. None of our youth has gotten to the age yet where they've been able to actually shape curriculum. The oldest of our alumni are now in their mid-twenties to late-twenties; they're getting there for sure. As you know, curriculum is provincial and territorial and quite complex, but they're moving up the chain quickly and they're going to be in leadership positions pretty soon. We also take teachers on our expeditions and they play roles back in their provinces as well.

Ms. Lois Brown: How about members of Parliament?

Mr. Geoff Green: Well, you're all invited.

We have had some retired members of Parliament come, but we love to bring leaders and mentors like all of you. I think a big part of the experience is eating breakfast, lunch, and dinner for two or three weeks with people in leadership positions.

Ms. Lois Brown: I'd be very interested to see what kinds of curriculum opportunities the students have because I think there is a real deficit of information out there. If my daughter's experience in trying to pull together curriculum for her classroom is any indication, it has been a real challenge. So I'd be interested to see what your business plan looks like on that.

Is there any way this could be integrated with your concept of polar house? Is that more a museum style or is polar house something that is separate and apart from the polar school? What does that look like?

The Chair: I'll let you finish the answer, but that's all the time we have.

Mr. Geoff Green: It's separate. The concept is not as a museum. It would complement the other national museums in Ottawa. It's more of a gathering centre for all stakeholders and an educational centre about the north, but also a centre to showcase what our government is doing in the north, and much more—but not a museum.

● (1255)

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm going to finish up with you, Mr. Eyking, for six minutes, please.

Hon. Mark Eyking: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, guests, for coming.

When you look at the big picture here, you know how the Europeans went west to Atlantic Canada, and then everybody was pushing them further west for expansionism, and you can see how that went.

All of a sudden, it's all eyes are on the north, right? You alluded to Antarctica, but maybe because we're in the northern hemisphere, of course, it seems like the biggest change is happening up there. The Arctic is a bit of a barometer of the environment of our planet. It's also going to open up all these great economic opportunities. One would say, did we do it right in the last couple of centuries, and how are we going to do it in this upcoming century if the Arctic is the so-called last frontier?

I'm more curious about international protocol and how we go down that route. The recent article in *The Economist* talked about how the species are going to change. Fish are going to move from one area to another area; birds, wildlife, everything is going to change if the graph continues the way it goes.

I think we're going to be chairing this Arctic Council, and the Americans are going to follow suit. On the Obama administration, my sense from him in his State of the Union address is they want to put a bit of a stamp on being environmentalists. That all being said, what should we push to make sure we take into consideration indigenous people and everything I talked about? How do we really enforce something in this Arctic Council that will set the table, which could be key for the upcoming century on how the Arctic is going to be handled overall?

Prof. Greg Poelzer: It has to be with northerners, and you have to have the capacity for northerners to shape how the north should develop.

Let me come back to the previous member. In terms of capacity, everything from high school completion to vocational training is critically important, and university is part of it, of course. Those kinds of skills and research should be based in the north, driven by northerners, for northerners, and be appropriate for northern communities, economies, and so on. That's where the largest investment needs to be shaped, rather than from the south. I think that's a critical thing Canada needs to do. In the post-Second World War period we haven't done nearly enough, especially compared to our seven circumpolar neighbours. I think that's a critical difference Canada needs to—

Hon. Mark Eyking: Just on that, and your being a westerner, you know how we did it. We just plopped that railroad across western Canada, and there wasn't much consideration for the aboriginal people. What's going to safeguard us from just pushing these people aside?

Prof. Greg Poelzer: Well, there are a couple of things. One is capacity. You take, for example, in terms of an Inuit education strategy, they're already speaking.... I was just at a conference a couple of weeks ago, chaired by Mary Simon, about an Inuit education strategy. If we look at our northerners, that's the kind of investment that in this case is capacity building but also in governance, another area. Those are the tools that can ensure that northerners are shaping their own futures. I think that's the critical direction.

I'll give you an example from a provincial north. Northern British Columbia, among the 10 provinces, had the worst post-secondary participation rate 20 years ago. When they built the University of Northern British Columbia, 70% of the students who graduated from there stayed in the north. Instead of the rotating belt of people going up for six months or two years, you had northerners occupying for the long term, having the institutional capacity to shape the direction of northern British Columbia. You see that in terms of the transportation corridor that's evolving and so on.

It's the same thing in other parts of the provincial north. In the territorial north, they need to be done as well. I would think—

● (1300)

Hon. Mark Eyking: I have to interject because I'd like Geoff to speak a little bit about what happened in Russia when their aboriginal people—or their indigenous people—were pushed aside. With Russia having one of the greatest opportunities in the fishing industry in the north, where their population's being pushed aside, what can we learn from that?

The Chair: Geoff, that's all the time we have, but go ahead. I'll let you just give us a quick answer.

Mr. Geoff Green: I think we can learn that's not the way to go. The way the Russians have pushed out RAIPON is not a stellar example of the way to deal with your northern aboriginal people. The Russian model is probably not one for us to look at.

To answer your other question, I agree with our other witness. Engagement of our northern peoples and northern organizations is key. They have a lot of experience. They've lived in the Arctic for millennia. There's a lot of capacity, but there needs to be more.

Legally, with treaties, they need to be equal players at the table, so that's one.

I think common sense is something we should always fall back on. We can learn a lot from what's happened in the past with development around the world, including in the Arctic. There's been development in the Arctic for decades, which most people forget. There have been mines, many of them very successful.

Lastly—sorry, Chair—I would say there's a lot of expertise out there, including within the Arctic Council. The sustainable development working group of the Arctic Council has done great work, so we're not starting from scratch here.

The Chair: Thank you.

To our witnesses, Greg Poelzer on the phone from Saskatoon, thank you for joining us today, sir.

Prof. Greg Poelzer: Thank you kindly.

The Chair: To Geoff Green, thank you, and thank you for working around our bells and votes. We had to make the meeting a little bit shorter, but thanks for getting on the record.

With that, the meeting is adjourned.