



Inuit Circumpolar Council Salutes the Canada-USA Statement on Arctic Cooperation

Friday March 11, 2016 - The Inuit Circumpolar Council (ICC) applauds the joint statement released by the United States and Canadian governments on Arctic cooperation. In particular, ICC appreciates the attention given to issues related to climate change, renewable energy needs, shipping safety and impacts, Arctic fisheries, Indigenous Knowledge, the importance of Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic and the need for knowledge based decision-making. Yesterday's announcement shows strong leadership that the Obama and Trudeau Administrations offer, and the required bi-lateral approach needed to address the many concerns facing our world today.

ICC Chair Okalik Eegeesiak said there is a geological shift in moving Arctic issues to the forefront of global diplomacy, which recognizes the connectivity between the Arctic and the rest of the planet. "Yesterday reminded me of when we start to see the sun after months of Arctic winter darkness. It is a time when the whole Arctic is celebrating as we are celebrating this agreement today."

Jim Stotts, ICC-Alaska President said, "We are dismayed that Inuit were not consulted with prior to this agreement being made. The United States Arctic Policy requires consultation with Inuit. However the attention to the Arctic and issues that matter to Inuit is appreciated. Moving forward, we must be meaningfully engaged in decisions that affect us."

Of particular interest to ICC is the understanding and acknowledgement of the importance to provide decision makers with the best available information and that this information will come from both science and Indigenous Knowledge. Inuit are part of the Arctic ecosystem and have safeguarded it throughout our cultural history. ICC reminds all governments of the importance of sustainable Arctic economic development that is driven by and empowers Inuit. We have to face challenges today with a balanced approach.

Many of these changes are the result of climate change or increase in climatic variability. The Paris climate talks took a positive direction to addressing many of these changes. In the Paris climate talks in December, Ms. Eegeesiak led an international Inuit delegation that helped focus global leaders on the Arctic, one of the world's most vulnerable and fragile ecosystems. She said, "It is especially important that one of the main pillars of this effort builds on what we accomplished in Paris. We are excited to see the same acknowledgement of the importance and vulnerability of the Arctic in this joint effort."

While many discussions occur internationally to address policy concerns, Inuit communities face day to day challenges, such as the growing cost of energy and basic services. This bi-lateral commitment to study, identify and implement options for renewable energy sources will move us in the direction to creating stronger sustainable communities.

We look forward to working with the US, Canadian and other governments to further these discussions and efforts.

ICC is an indigenous organization that represents 160,000 Inuit across Chukotka, Alaska, Canada and Greenland on matters of international concern. ICC holds Consultative Status II with the United Nations and a Permanent Participant at the Arctic Council.

Click to view the entire USA-Canada Agreement here:

<http://www.pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2016/03/10/us-canada-joint-statement-climate-energy-and-arctic-leadership>

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