

**Speaking Notes**  
**for**  
**The Honourable Carolyn Bennett**  
**Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs**

**Inuit Circumpolar Council**  
**13<sup>th</sup> General Assembly**  
***“What is Canada doing for Inuit and the Arctic?”***

**Utqiagvik (Barrow), Alaska**  
**July 16, 2018**

Word count: 1,713 (approx. 14 minutes)

Distinguished delegates, elders, Inuit leaders from Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Chukotka (Russia) and fellow government officials:: greetings – bonjour – ullukkut<sup>1</sup> [OO-loo-koot] – uvlulluataq [ov-loo-loa-tack].<sup>2</sup>

It is truly wonderful to be here, acknowledging that we are meeting today on traditional territory of the Iñupiat [Ee-noo-pee-at].

A very special thanks to the Canadian outgoing Inuit Circumpolar Council Chair, Okalik Eegeesiak, and to the head of the Canadian delegation, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami President Natan Obed.

I would also like to acknowledge with sadness the passing of former ICC President, Hans Pavia Rosing [Hanz Pav-ee-ah Ro-zing].

He was a pillar of the ICC community and his loss is deeply felt.

---

<sup>1</sup> Good Day.

<sup>2</sup> Good Day in Inupiat.

Today, we have the opportunity at this General Assembly to look back over the past 40 years to see what has been accomplished since the then Inuit Circumpolar Conference was first established.

I want to extend my thanks and appreciation to Mary Simon, an ICC founding member, who is here in a position of honour this week.

Her vision about the interconnectedness of Inuit with the land, sea and ice has helped shape the spirit of the ICC and subsequent government policy, such as the Arctic Policy Framework that Canada is working on based on her advice.

The ICC has contributed consistent leadership to the Arctic Council - and to the Arctic community as a whole. I applaud their work.

I am truly honoured to be part of this gathering of inspirational leaders and thinkers.

This week's General Assembly is an opportunity to look back over the past four years, since you put out the call: "One Arctic. One Future".

I'm here today to provide you with a report on how Canada is working with Inuit to build a strong shared future for the Arctic.

I am excited to speak about the changes that have been taken place and the collaboration taking place in Canada.

In Canada, we are taking on a new way of doing things.

As Inuit leader Sheila Watt-Cloutier says in her book *The Right to Be Cold*, “A holistic approach must be taken to heal the wounds that affect Inuit communities [...] Our challenges cannot be siloed.”

We are taking this advice to heart.

I want to frame my remarks by talking about two critical initiatives that are going to result in solutions for Inuit being defined by Inuit: The Arctic Policy Framework and the Inuit Crown Partnership Committee.

Forty years ago, Nellie Cournoyea, who is an Inuvialuit leader in Canada and was the first female premier of a territory in Canada, said that paternalism has been a total failure. In saying this, she laid out the core challenge of any new policy approach.

Paternalism makes no sense and has no place in Canada - and certainly not in the North where land claims and modern treaties with Inuit set the foundations for an Inuit-to-Crown relationship based on respect and the recognition of Indigenous rights.

This is precisely why the Government of Canada is now working closely with Inuit and other Northerners to develop a new Arctic Policy Framework.

There is no question that the best policy gets developed when you include those that it will impact the most.

At the Arctic Circle meeting in Reykavik last fall, we scratched our heads in disbelief a few times – Japan was hosting one of the main receptions, and isn't even close to the Arctic Circle.

As Canadians, we said that Arctic policy must represent the priorities of the people who live there, and conversations about the North must be led by the people of the north.

In January, I spent time in Iqaluit with the Qanak Collective – a group of emerging young leaders – where we had a frank discussion about Inuit priorities.

One of the participants expressed a healthy skepticism in the South's ability to make decisions for the Arctic, and he asked me what I will do to put the power to make decisions in the hands of Inuit.

The spirit of his question must be the spirit of the Arctic Policy Framework.

The co-drafting of the Arctic Policy Framework is building on the work of Mary Simon.

She consulted broadly with Inuit and other Northerners and published a report called “A New Shared Arctic Leadership Model.”

In it she writes, “...the simple fact is that Arctic strategies throughout my lifetime have rarely matched or addressed the magnitude of the basic gaps between what exists in the Arctic and what other Canadians take for granted.”

The days of paternalism are over.

We will write a future together - one that reflects the majesty of the land and sea and the dignity of the people.



Over the last several months, we have been working with Inuit and with subnational governments to co-write the new Arctic Policy Framework.

The Framework will address key priorities that Inuit have identified

- priorities like:

- comprehensive Arctic infrastructure;
- strong Arctic people and communities;
- strong, sustainable, and diversified Arctic economies;
- Arctic science and Indigenous knowledge;
- protecting the environment and preserving Arctic biodiversity;
- and the Arctic in a global context.

Our work together is framed by our commitment to the recognition and implementation of rights and making this the starting point for federal action.

Our approach to the Arctic Policy Framework reflects our broad commitment to respect Inuit priorities for Inuit Nunangat, and to ensure decisions about Inuit are made by Inuit.

This is one of the top goals of the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee, which was created in February 2017 in Iqaluit.

The Committee is more than just a place for joint reporting or simply a forum for discussion.

It is an entirely new process – that properly expresses the new relationship between Inuit and the Crown.

The mechanism ensures regular meetings between the Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers and senior representatives of the Government of Canada with Inuit governments and organizations.

In this new policy space, either Inuit or the Crown can present priorities for joint decision-making, and then decide together how to create tangible changes in those priority areas.

Progress is monitored to ensure we are meeting each year's commitments.

There is also activity happening in several other areas of the federal government where this renewed relationship has truly helped to show considerable progress.

Another issue that is important to our Government and one we are working in partnership with northern and Indigenous communities is to ensure access to affordable, healthy, culturally appropriate foods.

Northerners have been clear that access to 'country food' and support for traditional ways of feeding their families need to be part of the solution and we are working with Indigenous groups to deliver on our promise.

In her book, *The Right to Be Cold*, which is so aptly named, Sheila Watt-Cloutier sums up the urgency of the situation in the Arctic, and I quote, “The Arctic ice and snow, the frozen terrain that Inuit life has depended on for millennia, is now diminishing in front of our eyes.”<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> p. xiv.

The Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee has designated Environment and Climate Change as a priority – with a focus on Inuit-driven climate research, policy-making and actions.

Canada has invested significant amounts in two programs to help harness the knowledge of Inuit and other Northerners on climate change policy:

25-million dollars will support Indigenous organizations participating in the development of domestic climate-change policy

And more than 83-million dollars will help to integrate traditional Indigenous knowledge into community-based climate monitoring and climate-change adaptation.

I want to turn now to another key priority of the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee – one that has, rightfully so, been getting a lot of attention lately: Inuktitut revitalization.

It is one of my mantras that a connection with language and culture for youth provides a secure, personal and cultural identity.

This particular priority is crucial at a time when the Government of Canada is working to undo the harms associated with assimilation policies of the past, which included massive loss of Indigenous languages in residential schools and day schools.

Our priority work within the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee is to facilitate resourcing for Inuktitut revitalization and maintenance.

This will support efforts to revitalize Inuktitut in grade schools. Collaborative efforts are also leading to the development of a national First Nations, Inuit and Métis Language Act.

I will now turn to another key priority – that of health and wellness, and I will focus on tuberculosis.

In Canada, in Inuit Nunangat, the incidence rate of tuberculosis for Inuit is more than 300 times that of the Canadian-born, non-Indigenous population.

That is a national crisis.

Last March, the day before World Tuberculosis Day, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Government of Canada announced Canada's goal to eliminate tuberculosis in Inuit Nunangat by 2030 and to reduce the incidence of active tuberculosis by at least 50% by 2025.

This will be guided by a TB Elimination Framework that will address the social determinants of health.

Through the work of the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee, we aim to finalize this Framework this coming year, as well as develop and implement tuberculosis elimination plans in each Inuit region.



The Government of Canada is also working collaboratively to address health and socio-economic factors contributing to the high incidence of tuberculosis among Inuit.

Reducing overcrowding and improving housing for Inuit is key in the fight against TB!

According to the 2016 Census, 51.7% of Inuit living in Inuit Nunangat lived in crowded homes compared to 8.5% of non-Indigenous Canadians nationally, and 31.5% reported living in homes that they identified as needing major repairs.<sup>4</sup>

This state of affairs – like TB among Inuit – is also at crisis proportions.

---

<sup>4</sup> <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/as-sa/98-200-x/2016021/98-200-x2016021-eng.cfm>

To address this, we are co-developing an Inuit Nunangat Housing Strategy to develop sustainable long-term housing solutions. Work is progressing well, and we plan to have a final version completed this fall.

The final strategy will include a long-term vision for Inuit housing, a business case for improved housing outcomes, a housing need analysis, and recommendations to strengthen Inuit capacity and self-determination in housing.

Through investments made in Budget 2017 and Budget 2018, the Government has dedicated funding to support the successful implementation an Inuit-led housing strategy.

This includes:

400-million dollars over 10 years for housing in the Inuit regions of Nunavik, Nunatsiavut and Inuvialuit in support of the Inuit-led housing strategy.

This is in addition to the 240-million dollars over 10 years announced in Budget 2017 to support housing in Nunavut.

Through our work on the Arctic Policy Framework and the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee, I am confident that progress can be made in priority areas to improve conditions for Inuit across Inuit Nunangat.

I am grateful for the opportunity to provide this country report, and I value the opportunity to learn more about what other jurisdictions are doing for Inuit and the Arctic.

Thank you. Merci. Qujannamiik [Koo-yan-na-mEEK]. Quyana [Koo-yah-na]. **Nakumek**<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Inupiaq North Slope dialect.