

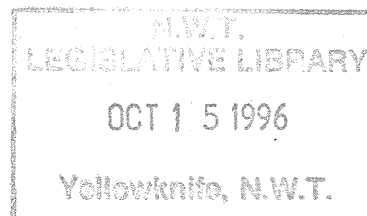
SPEAKING NOTES FOR MINISTER KAKFWI
CANADIAN POLAR COMMISSION CONFERENCE
“CONTAMINANTS, THE ENVIRONMENT AND
HUMAN HEALTH IN THE ARCTIC”

OCTOBER 8-10, 1996

IQALUIT, N.W.T.

THANK YOU MR. CHAIRMAN. I APPRECIATE THE INVITATION TO ADDRESS THIS CONFERENCE ON CONTAMINANTS IN THE ARCTIC, A SUBJECT THAT IS OF GREAT CONCERN TO THE NORTH AND NORTHERN RESIDENTS. THIS ISSUE IS OF GRAVE CONCERN TO ME BECAUSE IT CONTINUES TO BE A PROBLEM WITHOUT ANY APPARENT PROGRESS IN FINDING A LASTING SOLUTION.

I WILL LEAVE THE DISCUSSIONS ON CONTAMINANTS TO THE PARTICIPANTS AT THIS CONFERENCE WHO ARE EXPERTS BECAUSE OF THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF THE CAUSE AND EFFECTS OR WHO,



TOGETHER WITH YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILIES, LIVE WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF CONTAMINATION OF ARCTIC RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT. ALL OF YOU HAVE A GREAT DEAL TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE DELIBERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ARISING FROM THIS CONFERENCE. I LOOK FORWARD, AS MINISTER OF RESOURCES, WILDLIFE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND AS A NORTHERN ABORIGINAL PERSON, TO YOUR CONFERENCE REPORT.

TODAY I WOULD LIKE TO FOCUS ON THE CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES WE FIND OURSELVES IN AS POLITICIANS, RESEARCHERS, AND CITIZENS AND THE POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF THIS NEW "ENVIRONMENT" ON THE FUTURE OF POLAR SCIENCE AND TO OPEN DEBATES SUCH AS THE OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED BY THIS CONFERENCE.

WE ARE ALL AWARE THAT THE EXISTENCE OF THE POLAR COMMISSION IS BEING CHALLENGED. THE INUVIALUIT REGIONAL CORPORATION AND THE GWICH'IN TRIBAL COUNCIL HAVE RECENTLY

WRITTEN TO PREMIER MORIN ASKING THAT THE MANDATE AND FUTURE OF THE COMMISSION BE REVIEWED. THESE CHALLENGES PROMPTED ME, AS MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR NWT RESOURCES AND THE ENVIRONMENT, TO REVIEW THE REASONS WHY THE POLAR COMMISSION WAS ESTABLISHED IN THE FIRST PLACE AND WHETHER THOSE REASONS STILL HAD MERIT.

I CONCLUDED THAT NOT ONLY DID THEY STILL HAVE MERIT, BUT POSSIBLY ARE MORE CRITICAL IN TODAY'S CIRCUMSTANCES.

I BELIEVE CONSIDERATION OF THIS ISSUE IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE THOSE INTERESTED IN POLAR SCIENCE AND OPEN DEBATE WANT TO SEE CONTINUED COORDINATION, COOPERATION AND EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO THE ARCTIC REGION OF CANADA, SUCH AS THE SUBJECT WE ARE DISCUSSING TODAY. THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN A NUMBER OF INITIATIVES OVER THE LAST YEAR THAT MAKE SUCH AN EVALUATION TIMELY.

THE ONGOING RELEVANCE OF THE POLAR COMMISSION WAS EVALUATED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DURING ITS AGENCY REVIEW, UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE HONOURABLE MARCEL MASSE, PRESIDENT OF THE TREASURY BOARD. A REVIEW OF FEDERAL AGENCIES WAS INITIATED TO ELIMINATE INACTIVE OR UNNECESSARY AGENCIES AND TO STREAMLINE THE REMAINING ONES WHEREVER POSSIBLE. THE POLAR COMMISSION WAS NOT IMMUNE TO THIS FEDERAL REVIEW.

WHILE THE POLAR COMMISSION WAS SCRUTINIZED AND WAS AFFECTED BY THIS REVIEW, THE DECISION OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WAS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF BOARD MEMBERS BUT OBVIOUSLY SAW THE MERIT IN CONTINUING THE OPERATION OF THE COMMISSION'S ACTIVITIES.

SECONDLY, THE RECENT ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ARCTIC COUNCIL AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WORK OF THE POLAR COMMISSION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED. CANADA TOOK THE LEAD IN PROMOTING

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ARCTIC COUNCIL AND WILL PROVIDE SUPPORT FOR THE COUNCIL IN ITS FIRST TWO YEARS. AMONG OTHER INFORMATION, CANADA'S REPRESENTATIVES ON THE COUNCIL WILL NEED A CURRENT AND CONSISTENT OVERVIEW ON THE STATE OF ARCTIC RESEARCH IN CANADA, AS WELL AS CANADA'S POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES IN THE FIELD OF INTERNATIONAL POLAR RESEARCH.

OTHER INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN BY GOVERNMENT IN THE NAME OF DEFICIT REDUCTION HAVE IMPACTED ON POLAR SCIENCE, THE LIVES OF NORTHERNERS AND ON ACTIVITIES OF AGENCIES SUCH AS THE POLAR COMMISSION. I WAS MINISTER OF RENEWABLE RESOURCES IN THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES AT A TIME WHEN FINANCIAL RESOURCES WERE NOT LIMITED IN THE MANNER WHICH WE FACE TODAY.

AS MINISTER OF THE NEWLY AMALGAMATED DEPARTMENT OF RESOURCES, WILDLIFE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, MY

CURRENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND CHOICES ARE VERY DIFFERENT. TODAY AS POLITICIANS, RESEARCHERS, SCIENTISTS AND CITIZENS WE FIND OURSELVES IN A NEW "ENVIRONMENT".

WHAT DO WE AS NORTHERN AND ABORIGINAL PEOPLE WANT TODAY? WE WANT ACCESS TO RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT. WE WANT TO BE PARTNERS IN THAT RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT. WE WANT THE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT TO BE COORDINATED AND BASED IN THE NORTH.

WHAT DO THE ENVIRONMENTALISTS WANT? THEY WANT GOOD QUALITY RESEARCH, THEY WANT IT COORDINATED AND THEY WANT A CLEAR FINANCIAL COMMITMENT TO IT.

WHAT DO DEVELOPERS WANT? THEY WANT TO BE SURE THAT THE BASIC RESEARCH IS DONE NOW AND NOT ON AN AD HOC PROJECT BY PROJECT BASIS.

WHAT DO SOUTHERN CANADIANS WANT? THEY WANT TO KNOW THERE ARE CLEAR NATIONAL PRIORITIES ON ARCTIC AND POLAR RESEARCH. THEY WANT A CLEAR, COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TOWARDS KEEPING THE NORTH STRONG AND CLEAN.

HOW CAN THESE NEEDS BE FULFILLED IN TODAY'S ENVIRONMENT.

GOVERNMENTS AND NON-GOVERNMENT AGENCIES ARE ALL FINDING THEMSELVES IN A FISCAL CRUNCH. NEW MONEY IS THE EXCEPTION RATHER THAN THE RULE. DOWNSIZING, ELIMINATION OF OVERLAP AND DUPLICATION, EFFECTIVE, EFFICIENT, AND AFFORDABLE HAVE BECOME THE KEY PHRASES OF THE WORKPLACE. WHILE THIS HAS PLACED INCREDIBLE STRESS ON THE VARIOUS SYSTEMS, PROGRAMS AND ESPECIALLY EMPLOYEES, IT MAY NOT BE ALL BAD. IT DOES FORCE A REEVALUATION OF WHAT IS IMPORTANT--- WHAT ARE OUR PRIORITIES. IT ALSO PROVIDES AN INCENTIVE TO INCREASE COOPERATION TO ACHIEVE THE MOST WITH LIMITED RESOURCES.

THE REPORT "THE SHIELD OF ACHILLES" PREPARED BY PROFESSOR TOM SYMONS IN 1988, CALLING FOR THE CREATION OF A POLAR RESEARCH COMMISSION, ANTICIPATED THESE REQUIREMENTS. HIS ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS ARE AS RELEVANT TODAY AS THEY WERE WHEN HE WROTE THEM.

PROFESSOR SYMONS EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE STATE OF POLAR KNOWLEDGE IN CANADA, INDICATING THAT THE "GREAT DIVERSITY AND WIDESPREAD DISPERSION OF THOSE ENGAGED IN RESEARCH IN AND ABOUT CANADA'S POLAR REGIONS HAS SLOWED AND HANDICAPPED THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STRONG AND EFFECTIVE CANADIAN POLAR RESEARCH COMMUNITY". HE RECOMMENDED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A POLAR RESEARCH COMMISSION TO PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT AND DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE IN AND ABOUT THE NORTH. HIS PROPOSALS HAD WIDESPREAD APPROVAL WITHIN THE POLAR RESEARCH COMMUNITY.

IN 1988 WHEN THE SHIELD OF ACHILLES WAS RELEASED, THE REPORT INDICATED THAT THERE WERE OVER 100 AGENCIES ENGAGED IN ARCTIC RESEARCH BUT THAT THERE WAS A STRIKING LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT WHAT WAS AND WAS NOT BEING DONE IN MANY FIELDS OF POLAR RESEARCH. THE REPORT ALSO WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE REMOTENESS AND ALIENATION OF NORTHERN CANADIANS FROM MOST CANADIAN POLAR RESEARCH AND NATIONAL AFFAIRS.

SINCE THAT TIME, THE NUMBER OF AGENCIES UNDERTAKING POLAR RESEARCH HAS INCREASED BUT THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR THOSE ACTIVITIES HAS DECREASED.

ON THE POSITIVE SIDE, STEPS HAVE BEEN TAKEN TO INCLUDE NORTHERN AND ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND CONDUCT OF RESEARCH ACTIVITIES. TRADITIONAL ABORIGINAL KNOWLEDGE HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED BY THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY AND DEVELOPERS AS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF

RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS.

RESEARCH IS BEING VIEWED IN A BROADER CONTEXT, WITH CONSIDERATION BEING GIVEN TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL MATTERS AS WELL AS THE UNIQUE INTERRELATIONSHIP OF ISSUES AND PROCESSES IN THE CANADIAN NORTH. FOR EXAMPLE, MOVING AHEAD ON A PROTECTED AREAS STRATEGY BECAME ONE OF THE IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS OF GOVERNMENT, NORTHERNERS, ENVIRONMENTALISTS AND DEVELOPERS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE BHP DIAMOND PROJECT.

THERE IS NOW CLEARER RECOGNITION OF THE ROLE OF NORTHERN RESIDENTS IN THE FORMULATION OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT POLICIES. NWT ABORIGINAL CLAIM FINAL AGREEMENTS AND IMPLEMENTATION PLANS REQUIRE GOVERNMENTS TO SEEK THE ADVICE OF JOINT GOVERNMENT/ABORIGINAL RENEWABLE RESOURCE BOARDS IN POLICIES RESPECTING WILDLIFE RESEARCH AND THE EVALUATION OF WILDLIFE RESEARCH IN THE CLAIMS

SETTLEMENT AREAS. MANY OF THE SETTLEMENTS MAKE PROVISION, INCLUDING FINANCIAL RESOURCES, FOR RESEARCH AND HARVEST STUDIES. THERE IS AGREEMENT THAT THE RESOURCES BOARDS, GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES WILL WORK IN CLOSE COLLABORATION AND EXCHANGE FULL INFORMATION ON THEIR POLICIES, PROGRAMS AND RESEARCH.

GOVERNMENTS ARE ALSO RECOGNIZING THE BENEFITS OF INTERNAL COOPERATION. FOR EXAMPLE, FEDERAL GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS WITH NORTHERN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY INTERESTS ARE WORKING TOGETHER AT THE ASSISTANT DEPUTY MINISTER LEVEL TO ENHANCE AND IMPROVE CO-ORDINATION OF FEDERAL NORTHERN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ACTIVITIES.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HAS RECENTLY AMALGAMATED THE ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENTS OF RENEWABLE RESOURCES; ENERGY, MINES AND PETROLEUM RESOURCES; AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM. THE

JOINING OF THESE DEPARTMENTS INTO THE DEPARTMENT OF RESOURCES, WILDLIFE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROVIDES FOR AN INTERACTIVE BALANCE BETWEEN RESOURCES, THE ENVIRONMENT, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AT ALL LEVELS OF DECISION MAKING.

ALL OF THESE THINGS ARE STEPS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION BUT THERE IS AN INGREDIENT MISSING -- THAT OF OVERALL COORDINATION, MONITORING AND DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE THAT ENCOMPASSES ALL ACTIVITIES AND AGENCIES ENGAGED IN RESEARCH IN OR ABOUT CANADA'S POLAR REGION. IN THE MIND OF PROFESSOR SYMONS, THIS WOULD BE THE ROLE PLAYED BY THE POLAR COMMISSION.

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE POLAR COMMISSION TELLS ME THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SPENDS UP TO 7 BILLION DOLLARS ON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN CANADA BUT THERE IS NO ACCOUNTING OF HOW MUCH IS SPENT ON POLAR AND ARCTIC

RESEARCH. THERE IS AN IRONY IN THIS APPARENT LACK OF INTEREST IN NORTHERN RESEARCH EVEN THOUGH THE NORTH GEOGRAPHICALLY REPRESENTS ONE THIRD OF CANADA AND FOR MANY CANADIANS IS VIEWED AS A STOREHOUSE FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS.

IT IS TIME FOR CANADA TO TURN ITS ATTENTION TO THE NORTH. MORE SO THAN AT ANY TIME IN THE PAST, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT ALL AGENCIES AND INDIVIDUALS SHOULD BE AWARE OF WHAT IS AND WHAT IS NOT BEING DONE BY THEIR COLLEAGUES IN THE MANY FIELDS OF POLAR RESEARCH. LIMITED RESOURCES SHOULD BE IDENTIFIED AND CHANNELLED IN THE MOST PRODUCTIVE WAY AVOIDING UNNECESSARY, OR UNKNOWN, OVERLAP AND DUPLICATION OF EFFORT. THE POLAR COMMISSION COULD ASSIST IN BRINGING THESE DIVERSE COMMUNITIES TOGETHER AND PROVIDE AN ANNUAL OVERVIEW OF RESOURCES AND CANADIAN POLAR RESEARCH.

PROFESSOR SYMONS WAS CLEAR THAT THE POLAR COMMISSION "SHOULD NOT UNDERTAKE INITIATIVES THAT DUPLICATE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OR EFFORTS OF OTHERS, OR EVEN THAT COULD BE BETTER PERFORMED ELSEWHERE" NOR SHOULD IT "PRONOUNCE UPON NORTHERN POLICIES" OR "EXERCISE ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES". HE WAS CONCERNED THAT THE POLAR COMMISSION MAINTAIN AN INDEPENDENT AND CREDIBLE ROLE AS THE CENTRE ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION ON POLAR ISSUES.

THE POLAR COMMISSION, AS CATALYST AND PROMOTER, DISSEMINATING INFORMATION, MONITORING ACTIVITIES, ADVOCATING COOPERATION AND INCREASING SHARED KNOWLEDGE WITHIN THE RESEARCH AND NORTHERN COMMUNITIES CAN PROVIDE A USEFUL SERVICE FOR THE VARIOUS GOVERNMENTS AND AGENCIES IN ENCOURAGING THEIR COORDINATED MANAGEMENT OF NORTHERN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND IN MAKING THE BEST USE OF THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE.

IN CONCLUSION, THE INTERESTS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ARE SIMILAR TO THOSE OF NORTHERN AND ABORIGINAL PEOPLE, ENVIRONMENTALISTS, DEVELOPERS AND SOUTHERN CANADIANS. WHAT DOES THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES WANT? WE WANT AN ORDERLY, COORDINATED APPROACH TO RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT. WE WANT A LONG TERM FINANCIAL COMMITMENT TO RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN THE ARCTIC REGION. WHILE RECOGNIZING THAT WE ALL HAVE RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THIS GOAL, WE WANT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, AS A FIRST PRIORITY, TO UNDERTAKE THIS COMMITMENT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTH.

FINALLY, WE THINK THE CANADIAN POLAR COMMISSION IS A USEFUL AND MEANINGFUL VEHICLE TO HELP GET THIS IMPORTANT WORK DONE.