



Peter Goldring was asked to represent Canada at the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (SCPAR) a sub-committee of the Arctic Council held in September 2011 in Syktyvkar, Russia. This is his report.

The Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region is a biennial conference for parliamentarians representing the eight Arctic countries and the European Parliament. The first Parliamentary Conference concerning Arctic cooperation was held in Reykjavik, Iceland in 1993. The next conference will be held in the Iceland 5-7 September 2012.

The biennial conference is attended by representatives from the national parliaments of the Arctic states and the European Parliament. The Arctic indigenous peoples are permanent participants to the cooperation. Observers participate from governments and inter-parliamentary organizations as well as from observer states and relevant international organizations.

The Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, which is responsible for the work between conferences, started its activities in September 1994. The Standing Committee meets 3-4 times a year in the different Arctic countries to discuss current Arctic issues and the follow-up of the Conference Statement from the latest conference. The meeting in Syktyvkar was the second time Mr. Goldring has been asked to represent Canada at this meeting, the first time being in Ilulissat, Greenland, in May 2009.



Mr. Goldring, shown here with SCPAR Chairman Morten Høglund of Norway following a successful and productive meeting.

One of the main priorities of the Standing Committee was originally to support the establishment of the Arctic Council. Since then the Standing Committee has worked actively to promote the work of the Council and participates in the meetings of the Arctic Council as an observer. Today the Committee is engaged in topics like: shipping possibilities, education and research, human development and climate change.

The delegates also visited the Zaran folk



crafts centre in S. Vylgort and the Geology Institute Museum. The Canadian delegation took note of some comments made during the course of the tour of the Geological Museum concerning the development of the Russian oil sands. The delegates were shown geological samples and maps of the Russian oil sands. The samples and the maps suggested that Russia has considerable reserves of oil sands, perhaps comparable to Canada's oil sands. Mr. Goldring found this information to be highly illuminating as Russian oil sands development is a topic that seldom arises in discussions concerning fossil fuel development and climate change.

At the meeting in Syktyvkar Mr. Goldring reported on the steps Canada has taken and the policies it has put in place to promote clarity on the important questions regarding Canada's sovereignty over the Arctic and emphasized the importance of the arctic to Canada's economy, its national identity and its future development as an Arctic nation.

Canada's Arctic policy is guided by a series of principles and priorities that are clearly articulated in its northern strategy. This strategy, developed in 2009, is based on four priorities which continue to guide Canada's policy on the Arctic: Exercising our Arctic sovereignty; promoting economic and social development; protecting our environmental heritage and improv-

ing and devolving northern governance.

Sovereignty over the Arctic is a foundation of Canada's policy in respect to the Arctic. Canada is continuing to make significant investments in the Arctic to strengthen our presence there. These investments include an army training centre in Resolute Bay, the second-most northern community in Canada on the shore of the Northwest Passage, as well as expanding the Reserve Forces, the Rangers, to maintain surveillance and assist with search and rescue operations.

The Canadian Rangers, a sub-component of the Canadian Forces Reserve, provide patrols and detachments for employment on national-security and public-safety missions in those sparsely settled northern, coastal and isolated areas of Canada which cannot

conveniently or economically be covered by other elements or components of the Canadian Forces. Formally established in 1947, the Canadian Rangers protect Canada's sovereignty by reporting unusual activities or sightings, collecting local data of significance to the CF, and conducting surveillance or sovereignty patrols as required.

Canadian Rangers are dedicated, knowledgeable members of the Army Reserves and reflect the diversity of the communities they be-



Mr. Goldring was asked to play a replica of an ancient wooden musical instrument traditional in the sub-Arctic regions of Russia.



long to. Many Canadian Rangers are Aboriginal and there are a total of 23 different languages spoken. Easily recognized by their red sweatshirts and ball hats the Canadian Rangers play an important role in advancing public recognition of Canada's Inuit, First Nations and Métis.

There are currently over 4 250 Canadian Rangers in 169 communities across Canada. This number is expected to increase to 5,000 in 2012. Their mission is "to provide lightly equipped, self sufficient, mobile forces in support of the CF's sovereignty and domestic operation tasks in Canada".

The Canadian Rangers are the military's eyes, ears in the North hence their motto, Vigilans; "The watchers". Their original focus on sovereignty and surveillance is still a priority however having proven time and time again their resourcefulness and capabilities the Canadian Rangers have easily grown into other Domestic operations. Some significant examples of Ranger activities include routine Search and Rescue Operations and significant contributions in disasters such as the avalanche at Kangiqsualujjuaq in northern Québec or the drinking water crisis in Kashechewan, Northern Ontario. The Rangers perform their tasks exceptionally well and their value as an operational resource for the Canadian Forces cannot be disputed.



Mr. Goldring is shown here with Sebastian Spano (centre) of the Library of Parliament and Dennis Bevington, Member of Parliament for Western Arctic (Northwest Territories).

Canada is investing in a new deep-water berthing facility in Nanisivik, on Baffin Island in Nunavut Territory. It has launched the construction of a new fleet of patrol ships and is procuring the largest and most powerful ice-breaker in Canada's Coast Guard fleet.

Canada is also taking strong measures to protect our Arctic waters by amending an important piece of legislation – The Arctic Waters Pollution Prevention Act – to extend the application of the Act from 100 to 200 miles from Canada's coastline. This is the full extent of our exclusive economic zone recognized under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Although there continue to be a number of boundary disputes with several nations, notably Denmark and the United States, it must be emphasized that these concern the outer edges of the Canadian Arctic. More importantly, these disputes are well managed.

The dispute with Denmark concerns Hans Island. This is the only land in dispute in the Canadian Arctic. The island is approximately 1.3 square kilometres and is uninhabited and barren. However the maritime boundary dispute with Denmark was settled in 1973. Regular bi-lateral discussions are taking place to move towards a solution to the dispute over

Hans Island.

In the Beaufort Sea, the dispute concerns the maritime boundary north of the Yukon and Alaska. The United States does not accept Canada's consistent and long-held position that the 1825 Treaty of St. Petersburg establishes a maritime boundary along the 141st meridian of longitude. The disputed maritime area measures approximately 6,250 square nautical miles and both countries have agreed to dialogue and exchange experts in order to address the technical aspects of the boundary in the Beaufort Sea and on the extended continental shelf.

Mr. Goldring also emphasized Canada's sovereignty over the Northwest Passage. He said Canada welcomes navigation in its Arctic waters, but on the condition that ships respect Canadian controls related to safety, security protection of the environment and Inuit interests. He pointed out that the waters of the Arctic archipelago, including the Northwest Passage, are internal waters of Canada, with no strait used for international navigation running through them. Therefore there is no "right of passage" or of "innocent passage" through the Northwest Passage – Canada has unrestricted rights to exercise control over the Northwest Passage in the same manner as it does over land territory.

Update: Mr. Goldring is writing a report on Canada's oil sands that includes the oil sands reserves in other parts of the world, including Russia.

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This brochure series is intended to highlight special issues that Member of Parliament, Peter Goldring, has been involved in. If you wish to comment, please take a moment to fill out the survey below, write or call to the address above.

Your Opinion Matters...

Question 1 Is Canada's Arctic Strategy on the right track?

Yes

No

Question 2 Should Canada be doing more to assert its sovereignty over its Arctic lands?

Yes

No

Comments: _____

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