

## CANADIAN GOVERNMENT POLICY ON NORTHERN SOVEREIGNTY WHERE IS THE WHITE PAPER?

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This year, the media have been flooded with news reports of the government of Canada announcing initiatives to support this country’s sovereignty in the high Arctic. These reports and announcements have ranged from building a northern port, the construction of ice breakers, a military presence in the north to a navy capable of patrolling in Arctic waters with state of the art Corvettes. However, this piecemeal approach to a recurring national problem is not addressing the issue.

In February, the CDA Institute published the Vimy Paper 2 entitled “Defence Requirements for Canada’s Arctic” which was well received by numerous institutes across the country and indeed supported by a number of government ministers, senators and members of Parliament. It is suggested that although the Vimy Paper is military-centric in content, it does not go far enough in challenging the government to produce a firm policy on the entire issue. Although General Manson in his summary correctly identifies the requirements in this debate, challenging the government to implement a cohesive Arctic policy is missing. In other words, the requirement for a White Paper on Northern Sovereignty.

The Royal United Services Institute of Nova Scotia feels the government, although repeatedly stating a commitment to Northern Sovereignty, has missed the mark. What has not developed in recent years is a cohesive policy that, no matter which political party is in power, is a *de facto* blueprint to follow for years to come. RUSI Nova Scotia has written to many influential parliamentarians and they all support the notion of Northern Sovereignty. What is missing is a central department responsible for the development of a Northern Sovereignty policy. Who has the lead? There are standing committees; Canada participates in the Arctic Council established by Canada in 1996; and under subsection 23(1) of the Oceans Act, the Department of Foreign Affairs is the lead federal department on issues of national sovereignty with respect to bodies of water. So what? Who has the lead? Should it be the Department of Transport, Foreign Affairs, National Defence, Industry Trade and Commerce, Indian and Northern Affairs, the Department of the Environment? On initial examination, we would strongly suggest that a single department be designated by Cabinet as the agency responsible for Northern Sovereignty and that it be tasked with the introduction of a White Paper for passage in Parliament.

What should this paper address? There are a myriad of issues that have been identified in detail in the Vimy paper. However, a start point should be a commitment by the Government of Canada to the following areas of development:

(1) *Designation/construction of two northern deepwater ports.*

An eastern gateway to the Northwest Passage (the future Panama canal) and a western gateway. Studies suggest a potential western portal at Gray Bay or Bathhurst Inlet. Priority may rest in establishing the eastern gateway first at either Iqaluit or other port capable of deep water off-loading operations. An over-the-beach option should not be considered.

*(2) Designation of national and regional air hubs.*

Northern airfields are essential for Arctic resupply, passenger services and military requirements. *National* air hubs should be located at Yellowknife, Rankin Inlet and Iqaluit. *Regional* hubs should be identified and could include Inuvik, Cambridge Bay and Resolute. All these air hubs are capable of supporting C-17, C-130 and B737 type aircraft.

*(3) Development of a northern military training centre.*

The Canadian Forces will require a northern training centre for the conduct of Arctic operations. Such a facility should be identified in the white paper.

*(4) Cooperation with surrounding Arctic Countries.*

Working agreements on the ecology, pollution control, resource management and navigation in Arctic waters need to be agreed upon. The five Arctic nations involved need to be consulted and work together with Canada to make this policy a reality.

*(5) Control of northern waterways.*

Methods of navigation, pollution control, reporting and tracking of commercial and military sealift traffic must be identified. A coherent policy encapsulating these issues should be identified

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