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Canada's Territories support Canada at the Arctic Council: Circumpolar Relations, Adaptation, Sustainable Communities

Tromsø, Norway – April 29, 2009: Canada's three territories participated today as members of the Canadian delegation to the Sixth Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council in Tromsø, Norway at the invitation of Foreign Affairs Minister, Lawrence Cannon. Nunavut's Premier Eva Aariak, Northwest Territories' Premier Floyd Roland and Yukon's Deputy Premier Elaine Taylor joined the federal minister to discuss Arctic issues, including those emerging as the result of the impact of climate change.

Northern Premiers recognized the importance of circumpolar relations for Canada and the need for Northern issues to be addressed by Northern voices in their 2007 statement, *A Northern Vision: A Stronger North and a Better Canada*. That statement also stressed the need for building sustainable communities across the North and focusing on adaptation to the impacts of climate change.

"Never before has there been this much world-wide interest in the environment and economic potential of the Arctic," said Premier Roland. "The Arctic is our home and it is important for our circumpolar neighbours and the world community at large to listen to the voices of Northerners. We appreciate Minister Cannon's invitation to Canada's territories to take part in this ministerial meeting of the Arctic Council."

Premier Aariak added that the working groups of the Arctic Council continue to focus on the key issues created by a more accessible Arctic. "We had a very good discussion today on the challenges and opportunities that are resulting from an Arctic that is opening up as a result of climate change and melting ice. We share a common interest within the circumpolar region to balance sustainable development with environmental protection. We support Canada's leadership in the research and preparation of recommendations related to many of these emerging issues."

Climate change was a prominent theme of the ministerial meeting – and the Melting Ice Conference in Tromsø on April 28. "The issue of climate change is very important to people living in Canada's territories," Deputy Premier Taylor noted. "We have stressed for years that the North is feeling the impact of climate change. Our participation as members of the Canadian delegation is providing us with information that will assist us in our preparation for COP 15."

Ministers representing the eight Arctic States and the representatives of the six international indigenous peoples' organizations that are Permanent Participants at the Arctic Council, issued the *Tromsø Declaration* at the conclusion of today's meeting.

Premier Aariak suggested that the territorial participation at the Arctic Council meeting supported the frameworks of both the territorial *Northern Vision* and the federal *Northern Strategy*. "I believe that this is an excellent example of our moving forward in partnership with Canada."

Premier Roland added: "Building sustainable communities through investment in Arctic economic opportunities, adapting to climate change and ensuring that Northern voices are heard in Canada's circumpolar discussions – can be all advanced through the work of the Arctic Council."

Deputy Premier Taylor concluded: "We support more emphasis on communities in the sub-Arctic region as part of the Arctic Council agenda. Canada's territories look forward to working with the federal government to support the Arctic Council when Denmark chairs in 2009-2011."

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