Prime Minister’s 7th Annual Northern Tour

Prime Minister Stephen Harper

*During his week in Northern Canada, Mr. Harper highlighted his government’s achievements and future plans under the four pillars of the federal Northern strategy: economic and social development; protecting Canada’s environmental heritage; improving and devolving Northern governance, and maintaining Canadian sovereignty in the Arctic.*

**Minto, Yukon**
*(August 21, 2012)*

Our visit to Minto Mine is timely because responsible resource development is going to be critical for many years to come, not just for the Northern economy, but for Canada’s economy as a whole, and you can see that here with people who have come from all over Canada to work here.

Here is the big picture. In the next ten years, more than 500 large new development projects will be proposed for Canada. Together these new investments will be worth more than half a trillion dollars. This means jobs and growth, jobs and growth that Canada needs as we continue to navigate our way through a troubled global economy. Much of that growth will be here in the North. Indeed, such is the magnitude of the North’s resource wealth that we are only quite literally just scratching the surface.

Now, there is an even bigger picture. Resource development constitutes just one part of our Government’s Northern strategy. Our focus on the North, as my trips here demonstrate, is long-term. It is monumental in scope and ambition. It is an unprecedented exercise in promoting four things, economic and social development, in protecting our environmental heritage, improving and shifting governance to Northerners themselves, and of course, upholding Canadian sovereignty…

One of the guiding principles of our Northern strategy is that Northern development must mean Northern prosperity. I’m therefore delighted…to announce that earlier…Premier Pasloski and our Government…signed a revised royalty sharing agreement between our Government and the government of the Yukon.

Under this agreement, Yukoners will benefit to a much greater extent from the expected boom in mineral exploration and development during the decades to come.

Let me just take a moment to outline some very important achievements of the Northern strategy so far. I want to put particular emphasis just on achievements that relate to developments like this one. For instance, it’s been said that finding minerals is like looking for a needle in a haystack, especially in a land so vast and challenging as Canada’s North. Ultimately, industry has to find those needles, but the government can at least point it to the haystacks. That’s why we pledge to produce new geological maps of the North, to help prospectors find energy and minerals. In fact, much of the fieldwork has now been done, and the results made available. Exploration companies are now using the data to decide where they will invest. For example, following public release of data from our energy and minerals geomapping program, large parts of Southwest Yukon were staked…

Throughout the North, mining projects are providing well paying jobs for Canadians. Nine producing mines in the North, including Yukon’s own Minto, this one, Wolverine and Keno Hill, are providing opportunities for thousands of Canadians today. 24 advanced natural resource projects representing more than $20 billion in investment have the potential to provide opportunities for thousands more.
Our Government has also said that there should be an agency to help Northerners benefit from the opportunities to come. Therefore, we established the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency [CanNor]. Earlier this year, we opened its permanent headquarters, not, I might add, in Ottawa or Gatineau, but in Iqaluit…For some time the agency has been working with our Northern partners and stakeholders to create jobs, business opportunities, and long-term growth for Northern communities. Through CanNor, we’ve made investments in tourism, mining, oil and gas, geoscience, even fishing. For example, the small craft harbour to support the fishing industry at Pangnirtung is nearing completion.

Speaking of CanNor, one of its most important responsibilities is the Northern Projects Management Office. As in the South, we want to ensure a single window in industry in dealing with government.

We need thorough, balanced, science-based environmental assessments, conducted on a timely basis according to the principle of one project, one review, so that opportunities like this one here can be realized across the North in a responsible manner…Let me just say this. Much has been done, but there is much more to do. We are only just beginning, and so the results of our efforts are only just beginning to show. And why? Because, ladies and gentlemen…The North has always been Canada’s great frontier and Canadians’ greatest adventure.

We are determined through our sustained and unprecedented focus on the North that you shall see unprecedented Northern economic development over the next five years, nicely in time for Confederation’s 150th birthday.

That’s our goal, and we shall achieve it.

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**Norman Wells, Northwest Territories (August 22, 2012)**

Friends, Laureen and I are thrilled to be in the North for what is now my seventh summer tour. It’s always a part of the year that I look forward to. …We’ve accomplished much since my first official visit to the North in 2006…From the first days of our mandate, we’ve recognized that the increased likelihood of Northern industrial development has to mean a greater priority for Northern environmental protection. That’s why, for example, we pass regulations under the Canada Shipping Act to require ships entering the Northwest Passage to register with the Canadian Coast Guard, and to meet Canadian environmental standards.

We’ve also invested in and expanded our system of national parks and protected areas…For example, we’ve built a new visitor’s centre in Kluane National
Park, [and] we created the Tarium Nirytai Marine Protected Area, the first such region in the Canadian Arctic. And of course in 2007, just south of here in the Dehcho region, we announced the expansion of the Nahanni National Park Reserve…

Today at Norman Wells, I’m reminded of that occasion, for we are establishing another new park reserve in Canada’s North… I’m very pleased to announce that our government is establishing Canada’s 44th national park, the Nā̀ts’įhch’oh National Park Reserve… This park will encompass nearly 5,000 square kilometres. It will border the Nahanni National Park Reserve and extend to the Yukon border.

When combined with the Nahanni reserve, almost 35,000 square kilometres of land will be protected. With this announcement, we’re continuing to move forward on our commitment to expand the national park system in the North. And we are protecting our environmental heritage for generations to come…

Today’s announcement will ensure that almost the entire length of the South Nahanni River, its tributaries, and most of its watershed will now be protected within the national parks system.

Friends, there are more than environmental benefits to today’s announcement. There are social and economic benefits for the area as well. The park will bring infrastructure and employment, and it will bring new housing, skills development and training, specifically if a member of the Tulita, the Fort Norman Métis or the Norman Wells land corporation wants to undertake post-secondary education directly related to the park, there will be a scholarship fund to help them do it.

And because our Government is also committed to Northern economic growth, opportunities for resource development were carefully considered when setting the park’s boundaries, responsible resource development that will have direct and indirect economic benefits for this region…

Norman Wells has a long history of conservation and development working side by side. This is actually the first community in the Northwest Territories to be founded specifically for resource development. It is also the home to the Canol Heritage Trail. During the Second World War, this route was a service road for a pipeline bringing oil from Norman Wells to Alaska. Today it allows hikers to explore both the geography and history of this area.

And friends, I also want to highlight that we have created a cooperative management committee which engaged all levels of government. In other words, Northerners, those directly impacted by the creation of this park, had and will continue to have a say in its management.

Let me just close by saying this. Our North, its landscape, its people, and their way of life are iconic in the minds of Canadians, central to our identity as
the true North, strong and free. Even Canadians who have never seen this vast and beautiful wilderness know in their hearts that it defines us. I count myself profoundly fortunate to have seen as much of it as I have.

As Prime Minister, I’m proud that through our Northern investments, through our investments particularly in Northern national parks, we are helping to preserve this priceless inheritance.

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**Cambridge Bay, Nunavut**
**(August 23, 2012)**

Ladies and gentlemen, it’s a real pleasure to be here with all of you on this, my seventh annual summer tour of the great Canadian North… As Northerners, you know what I mean when I say that as you look out over the land, it seems endless, and so too are the North’s possibilities.

On Tuesday, I spoke of the vast mineral wealth upon which the economic future and orderly development of the North so vitally depends. Yesterday I talked about the North’s rich environmental heritage as we announced the boundaries of our newest national park.

Today is an important day for a reason related to both economic development and environmental protection, and that is scientific knowledge. Our Government believes strongly that our activities in the Arctic must be informed by and must add to our scientific knowledge of the region.

That’s one reason why, as I’ve mentioned before, we’ve invested in comprehensive geomapping in our territories and in research studies in our national parks. It’s why we’ve expanded the polar continental shelf program research facility at Resolute Bay, which is now complete, by the way, and in operation, and why we’re engaged in research work under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Expansion of our satellite surveillance capacity will also assist these endeavours.

Still, our decision in 2010 to establish a Canadian High Arctic Research Station right here is of the greatest significance.

And that’s why today I’m delighted to announce that our Government is committing significant funding over the next six years starting this year to begin the construction process for the Canadian High Arctic Research Station here at Cambridge Bay.

The project’s site selection is in its final stages. The project’s office will be open next summer, and actual construction of the centre will follow. But we are not waiting for completion of the building. Our Government is also committing a substantial additional amount for the research station’s crucial science and technology programs. All told, today’s announcement is a little under $200 million over the next six years.

My friends, our government believes that the right place to do research about the North is in the North. The Canadian High Arctic Research Station will serve a further purpose.

The Canadian High Arctic Research Station will also enhance Canada’s visible presence in the Arctic. In this way, science and sovereignty are entwined, and the important work now being done out of Resolute Bay on the continental shelf will dovetail with the research to be undertaken here.

Now, friends, I have one other significant matter to deal with. Next year, Canada will take over the chairmanship of the International Arctic Council.

I’m pleased to announce that in addition to her other ministerial duties, your Member of Parliament, Leona Aglukkaq will assume the role of Minister for the Arctic Council. In this capacity, she will be Canada’s chief representative, in effect, Canada’s ambassador to and chair of the Arctic Council.

…This is a very important job, and I know you will be consulting with territorial governments and Aboriginal organizations as you prepare for the chairship. The fact that we have for the first time appointed a cabinet minister to the position is a measure of how seriously we take this work, and we do…”

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**Churchill, Manitoba**
**(August 24, 2012)**

*Editors Note: In Churchill, the Prime Minister’s audience included members of the Canadian Armed Forces, Canadian Coast Guard and the RCMP.*

Standing here today, it’s easy to forget an earlier time, when the great powers plied these waters and fought to control the natural wealth of Northern Canada. But this history reminds us why we are here. This history reminds us why the work you are doing is of utmost importance to all of us as Canadians. Because our North, and all the wealth it contains, will be a critical part of Canada’s future.

And in an uncertain world where demand for resources is growing, where any number of civilian needs can suddenly come upon us, and where conflicts and potential conflicts remain ever present, you, our men and women in uniform, are here to literally
stand on guard for the true North, strong and free.

Your task demands readiness, capability and resolve. And as you conclude this sixth Operation NANOOK, the first ever in Hudson’s Bay, let me say that you personify these qualities. You are getting the job done, and you are all making Canadians very proud.

Since the first NANOOK exercise in 2007, more than 5000 members of the Canadian Armed Forces have taken part in these joint exercises in the North. You have practiced Arctic operations from Inuvik to the Davis Strait, from Ellesmere Island to this great historic bay.

Importantly, every one of these operations has been based on a real-life scenario. Sadly, possible scenarios sometimes become tragic realities, as we saw of the first Arctic offshore patrol ships, the assembling of the Diefenbaker-class icebreaker and the newest RADARSTAT Constellation Mission satellites.

And, of course, the annual and growing, Operation NANOK. This year’s Operation NANOOK is the largest Northern sovereignty exercise held ever. And it tested your response to an entirely plausible threat, that of ships entering our waters illegally. It involved all elements of the Canadian Armed Forces and of course Coast Guard and other government personnel, and as I watched the interception and storming of the ‘vessel of interest’ earlier today, I have to say, and I know I speak for everyone who was there, I was deeply impressed and frankly, as a Canadian, I was unabashedly proud of the skill and precision with which you performed.

...But always remember, anyone who puts on the uniform, whether it be military, coast guard, RCMP, or any other such service, takes on a big job and a noble calling. For there are those in this world who value strength at the expense of freedom, who would harvest resources by destroying our common environment and who would come here without respect for our laws. Against such risks, we must be prepared and you are the ones who are prepared.

Through history and destiny, it has become Canada’s destiny to protect a large portion of our planet’s North. Canada has been a consistent champion of the Arctic as a zone of responsible development, environmental protection and international peace. Yet, we also remain determined to assert our national interest and to protect our sovereignty in these lands.

...I believe our country’s greatest dreams are to be found in our highest latitudes. For us, the North is more than just a great land.

The North is Canada’s call to greatness...

last year in Resolute Bay with the crash of a First Air jet. It was a sad reminder that, in an uncertain world, constant preparedness is a soldier’s occupation.

Likewise, every one of these exercises has shown the world our deep resolve to exercise Canada’s sovereignty in our Arctic. This is precisely why I am here with you now, to wrap up a week during which we have showcased the remarkable, unprecedented breadth of our Government’s approach to Arctic sovereignty.

Responsible development of resources, the preservation of wilderness, opportunities and improvements in the lives of people and their communities, the scientific quest for knowledge from the mountaintops to the sea beds.

We have seen this week all such work, great work being done in Yukon, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, right across our North. But friends, it all depends on one thing: our sovereignty.

Our sovereignty, our presence and our ability to project that presence everywhere we place our flag, that is where you come in. You are part of the determined expansion that we are making to our sovereign presence in the Arctic, through expansion of the Canadian Rangers across the region, the construction of the Canadian Forces Arctic Training Centre at Resolute Bay, the enhancement of our military airlift capacity and, over the next five years, the completion of the Nanisivik naval facility, the arrival

Editor’s Note: The text that appears here represents long excerpts from the official speeches published by the Prime Minister’s Office. They have been reprinted with permission.
Above: The Prime Minister is greeted by members of the Canadian Rangers in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, August 23, 2012.
Below: (L-R) Minister John Duncan, Laureen Harper, Prime Minister Stephen Harper.