

Perspectives of appointed and elected officials: speaking notes

The Honourable Ethel Blondin Andrew

Minister of State, Northern Development
Government of Canada

Thank you

It is my great pleasure to bring greetings to the Northern Research Forum.

Canada is proud to host the third open meeting in this innovative and progressive series. On my own behalf and on behalf of my colleague, the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs and the Government of Canada, thank you for participating.

Many of you have travelled long distances from all parts of the circumpolar world to attend this forum. I am pleased to welcome you to Yellowknife, our territory's dynamic and friendly capital.

I want to thank the local host committee, the Canadian Polar Commission and all those who have worked so hard to put together an engaging agenda.

We are fortunate to be joined by one of Canada's most dedicated and passionate promoters of northern life and culture – Her Excellency Governor General Adrienne Clarkson. During her tenure, Madame Clarkson has placed a special emphasis on strengthening circumpolar relations.

Throughout the world, there is a growing appreciation for the importance of the circumpolar region in national and international affairs. Northerners are stewards of a delicate and critical ecosystem – one that is signaling the dangers posed by climate change and transboundary pollution.

We are engaged in the sustainable development of natural resources that have the potential of contributing to prosperity and economic growth. And the circumpolar region is home to a diversity of languages, artistic traditions and unique lifestyles that enrich the global cultural mosaic.

While the region faces many challenges, our population is young, optimistic and eager to play a greater role in their communities, their countries and the world.

The Northern Research Forum is becoming an important vehicle for making northern voices heard. This forum is succeeding because it allows for the sharing of knowledge and experience across borders... across cultures... across professions ...and across research disciplines.

Thanks to your efforts, governments can make more informed decisions that are based upon fresh ideas and sound science. And by engaging young researchers, the Northern Research Forum is investing in a new generation of active,

committed and critical members of our circumpolar society.

Together with the University of the Arctic and forums like this one, we are strengthening the commitment to higher education and research in the north.

Of all the positive things we see happening in our region, this trend is perhaps the most encouraging.

As a former educator, I have seen how education inspires young people living in the northern communities. It connects them to the world of opportunities. They learn to work hard and work together to achieve their goals. It fires their imagination – and provides the tools to take control of their own future. Education is the height of empowerment for young people.

This forum provides an inspiring example of all the positive contributions northerners working together can make to their community and to the world. I look forward to hearing your perspectives on the challenges and opportunities we share in the circumpolar community.

Once again, we appreciate the opportunity to host this engaging and informative dialogue here in Canada and I want to offer everyone best wishes on a productive and memorable forum.