Revenue minister wants to cut some red tape

Leader Post – August 28, 2012

Bruce Johnstone

While nobody likes paying taxes, the least the government can do is make it as painless as possible.

To that end, Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) is making it easier for businesses to file their taxes electronically and get information about tax policies through a one-stop webpage - www.cra.gc.ca/businessonline - and by translating complex tax rules into plain English (or French, as the case may be.)

Revenue Minister Gail Shea and Regina-Lumsden-Lake Centre MP Tom Lukiwski met with about 20 Regina business leaders here Monday about the Harper government's plans to reduce red tape, especially in the area of taxation.

"We always try to find ways to make the administration of business and their interaction with CRA a little easier (and) remove some of the red tape," said Shea, a former provincial MLA and cabinet
minister from P.E.I., who was first elected to the Commons in 2008 and served as Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

"We've taken some initiatives to do that, so we take the summer to get out and talk to Canadians about what's important to them and their business," said Shea, who managed a small family business for 15 years prior to her political career.

One of those initiatives is making tax information clear and understandable to average Canadians.

"We need plain, simple, clear language on documents, brochures and information," Shea said. "We're working on making our language plain and simple on our website so that the ordinary Canadian can understand it."

CRA is also moving to provide more service and information online in an effort to serve Canadian businesses faster and reduce response times. "We also had businesses who said we need to be able to interact with CRA a little easier. We need to be able to do it online because everything is electronic now."

In April, CRA introduced its My Business Account inquiries service, which allows businesses to ask the CRA specific tax-related questions about their account. Answers are delivered online to the business customer.

Businesses can also go to CRA's website and access the businessonline webpage for more generic information about CRA tax policies and services. Videos covering diverse topics, such as payroll, tax treatment of gifts and awards, recordkeeping, business income and expenses, incorporating a new business and CPP, are also available on the CRA's website.

Shea added CRA has also reduced the number of forms that have to be submitted for different tax transactions, "so there's less paperwork and less burden on business."

Keri McFadden, CEO of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Saskatchewan, which co-hosted Shea's meeting along with the Regina & District Chamber of Commerce, said the paperburden borne by business is a big issue for the accounting profession.

"Red tape reduction - reducing the paperwork businesses have to do, ... the number of filings that have be done, the disjointedness of (dealing with) the different departments, following up on items - that's one of the concerns we've heard."

ABORIGINAL NEWS

First Nations must share risks
Calgary Herald – August 28, 2012
Deborah Yedlin

An editorial penned by Shawn Atleo, National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, recently caught my eye.

It was about the role of First Nations in resource development projects, using the Northern Gateway pipeline project as a jumping off point for his argument. Essentially, Atleo's thesis was that First Nations can't be seen as afterthoughts but instead need to be included as bona fide participants when there are projects proposed which could impact their way of life.

On first reading, it seemed an articulate and convincing piece. On second reading, not so much.

Atleo speaks of the need to consult with First Nations when it comes to development projects - he suggests to "engage early and engage often" - and the fact the First Nations are the gatekeepers and original stewards of the land.
However, he later goes on to state that engagement does not guarantee a green light to proceed. If that's the case, why bother?
There isn’t a business on this Earth that will embark on a process of negotiation in good faith without some sense that it will ultimately be successful. There has to be a light at the end of the proverbial tunnel.
Instead, the way Atleo has cast it, it calls to mind Lucy inviting Charlie Brown to kick the football and pulling it away at the last minute.
In business, that's not happening.
Even more troubling is that Atleo's editorial is tantamount to a lecture on what government and business must do for the First Nations, not which responsibilities the First Nations will undertake in return.
This type of one-sided approach, nay, ultimatum, will never work.
All sides have to play ball - it's not just about government and business.
Atleo talks of the benefits that would accrue to First Nations if his approach is followed; that it would unleash their collective "full potential" because they need employment and training.
"Our governments want the skills to develop their own proposals for resource revenue sharing, reinvestment funds, environmental monitoring and management."
Wow.
Talk about a slap in the face of the energy sector, the largest employer of First Nations people in the country.
The impact goes beyond employment. There are initiatives that address educational challenges, such as Devon Canada building a high school in Conklin in northern Alberta, and others that promote entrepreneurship.
In 1984, for example, Syncrude Canada advanced $37,000 to the Fort McKay band to buy a bus that would shuttle people moving around the Syncrude site.
That was the beginning of Fort McKay Transportation - seen today as one of the most successful Aboriginal businesses in the country.
What many people don't consider - and isn't being acknowledged appropriately by Atleo and others - is that the energy sector sets up shop in places where other industries don't go.
While that is admittedly a double-edged sword, without the energy sector operating in the more remote parts of the country the opportunities for First Nations peoples would be greatly diminished.
In 2010 alone, more than $1.3 billion was contracted by oilsands companies for goods and services from companies owned by First Nations. In that last decade, that number is more than $10 billion.
Does this not count for anything?
What about the partnerships created with bands throughout Alberta, to say nothing of the Haisla and its involvement with the Kitimat LNG terminal in British Columbia?
Enbridge has negotiated a number of agreements with First Nations with respect to a risk-free equity interest in the Northern Gateway pipeline. The fact those that have reached such agreements are unwilling to disclose this, however, speaks to the lack of cohesion within First Nations - even a lack of respect for differences of opinion and need.
And there are aspects where Atleo puts himself in the quicksand.
“Productivity and competitiveness demands a stable legal environment,” Atleo wrote. He's right. Especially the statement about "stable legal environment" as it goes right to the issue of governance and accountability at the band level.

There is little stability in many bands because of how leadership changes, how that new leadership is chosen and who the beneficiaries are with each change at the top. This one cuts both ways - somehow Atleo missed it and it's a minefield no one wants to deal with.

He goes on to say, ‘We can push past conflict to implementing rights through agreed upon revenue sharing formulas, reinvestment strategies and clear requirements for engagement and agreements with First Nations before a project can proceed.'

Again. Does what has been accomplished with other projects - and is ongoing in places like the oilsands - not count for anything?

Atleo says Canada's path to prosperity runs through First Nations territories.

That's true. But that does not give First Nations the right to hold the country hostage, not to mention compromise its economic future. Just as every province is part of confederation, so, too, are First Nations.

We all benefit from an economically prosperous country.

One thing is certain in all this: change is needed - starting with the Indian Act.

But it has to come from both sides. And unless Atleo delivers that message to his constituents, there will be no resolution. Getting to "yes" will remain but a distant hope.

**NUNAVUT NEWS**

**Inuit groups praise Arctic Council appointment**

CBC News – August 27, 2012

Leona Aglukkaq's appointment to chair the Arctic Council is being welcomed by many Inuit organizations.

Aglukkaq, the federal health minister and M-P for Nunavut, will take on the role when Canada assumes leadership of the Arctic Council next year. Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced the appointment during his Arctic tour at a stop in Cambridge Bay.

The Arctic Council, which is currently led by Sweden, consists of eight Arctic states with six international organizations representing aboriginal peoples.

The Chair of the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, Duane Smith, said it's good Canada is being pro-active by selecting Aglukkaq. Smith said he hopes to start collaborating with Aglukkaq before she takes over the chair in January.

Aglukkaq's appointment was also welcomed by other organizations including Inuit who are concerned about rapid development in their region.

Nunavut Tunngavik President Cathy Towtongie said Canada needs to speak for Inuit on critical matters affecting the Arctic region now.

"A lot of other countries, foreign countries, like China and Korea are interested in gaining a seat a voting seat within the Arctic Council and she'll have to deliberate with the Inuit organizations within the circumpolar region on how to deal with that," she said.

Towtongie says the possibility of year round shipping and oil and gas development should be a priority for Canada because of the potential impact on people and the environment.

Aglukkaq will continue with her Ministerial duties while she's the chair.
Four-hour Aug. 30 power outage spells new age of power in Iqaluit

“Short term pain, long term gain”

Nunatsiaq News – August 27, 2012

DAVID MURPHY

If you live in Iqaluit, you might want to put some batteries in your alarm clock — a city-wide planned power outage is scheduled for Thursday, Aug. 30, from 2 a.m. to 6 a.m.

The announcement was made Aug. 27 by Quilliq Energy Corp., which says the outage is “required in order to perform maintenance upgrades to the distribution system in the area.”

For George Hickes, the manager of corporate communications at QEC, it’s a “short term pain, long term gain” scenario for Iqaluit.

“With the new system being put up, they have to shut everything down to link it all in,” Hickes said. “Basically this upgrade will allow any further needs of the city to be phased into the power system a lot easier.”

This is the last leg of Quilliq’s three-phased upgrade to the system, increasing Iqaluit’s power capacity from 5,000 volts to 25,000 volts.

Hickes said there will be fewer outages in the area after the upgrade, and if there is an outage, it will affect fewer residents.

It will also “allow for the city’s anticipated growth for the upcoming years and decades.”

“The 25-kV system has allowed for a fair bit of growth for the city of Iqaluit. For this planned upgrade, it will just phase everything in. It will modernize [the system] a lot, and it will things a lot easier for out operating and engineering crews,” Hickes said.

A new 25 kV — or 25,000 volt — substation is the North American standard for a power supply. The substation is located adjacent to QEC’s current power plant, and it’s believed the new system will last up to 50 years.

Since the upgrade started in 2010, QEC has replaced aged insulators, transformers, distribution lines and power poles with those capable of supporting the higher 25 kV voltage.

Hickes said he has done his best to get the word out about the four-hour outage, informing more than 50 people on his email distribution list, informing media, and putting the word out on QEC’s twitter account.

“We appreciate everybody’s understanding and patience through this,” Hickes said.

Harper winds up Arctic tour with a demonstration of force

“It has become Canada’s destiny to protect a large portion of our planet’s North”

Nunatsiaq News - August 27, 2012

After visiting the western Nunavut community of Cambridge Bay to make announcements about the Canadian High Arctic Research Centre, Leona Aqlukkaq’s future role as chairperson of the Arctic Council and the continuing hunt for the Franklin expedition’s lost ships, on the final day of his annual Arctic tour Prime Minister Stephen Harper turned his attention to the military’s role in defending Canada’s sovereignty.

Harper visited the site of Operation Nanook near Churchill where he participated in an emergency response simulation to a human smuggling scenario along with Peter MacKay, the defence minister, and General Walter Natynczyk, the chief of defence staff.
“Canada’s North is a cornerstone of our government’s agenda and a sovereign country must have the ability to defend its territory, all of its territory,” Harper said Aug. 24. “The Canadian Armed Forces and other government departments are doing a terrific job of defending our interests and preparing Canada for a possible emergency or security issue in the North. That is why our Government is committed to supporting our men and women in uniform to ensure they have the right equipment to get the job done.”

Through history and geography, “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,” Harper said during a speech aboard HMCS St. John’s.

This year’s Operation Nanook saw military troops boarding an eco-tourism vessel carrying illegal immigrants.

The demonstration, conducted in Hudson Bay about 55 kilometres from Churchill, saw about 30 members of JTF-2 elite force board the mock commercial vessel at sea.

Some rappelled from two Griffon helicopters onto the back deck of the ship, while others boarded from the water to secure the vessel and its passengers. Last year’s Operation Nanook in Resolute Bay was to have involved the military response to a simulated crash of two aircraft: this exercise was suspended following the Aug. 20 crash of First Air flight 6560 near the Resolute Bay airport, which killed 12 and injured three.

“Sadly, possible scenarios sometimes become tragic realities as we saw last year in Resolute Bay with the crash of a First Air jet,” Harper said. “It was a sad reminder that, in an uncertain world, constant preparedness is a soldier’s occupation.”

Operation Nanook, which also included a response to a “security breach” in the Western Arctic, cost about $16.5 million.

I refuse to be killed by you,’ woman recalls thinking during northern polar bear attack

With scavenging bears moving closer to northern communities, Alice Annanack recounts harrowing tale of surviving polar bear attack in Ungava Bay

Aaron Derfel

Montreal Gazette – August 23, 2012

MONTREAL - For years, Alice Annanack watched with dread as polar bears ventured farther and farther south after the spring thaws, scavenging for food close to her village of Kangiqsualujjuaq, Nunavik.

In July, Annanack and her husband, Tommy Baron, trekked to a campground close to the shores of Ungava Bay. At about 10:30 p.m. on July 23, with the sun in the Far North still high in the sky, Annanack stepped outside her cabin for a stroll.

Within seconds, a young polar bear - its white fur muddied from foraging for scraps - pounced on the 57-year-old mother of three, clawing at her back and biting into the top of her head.

She yelled out to her husband, but the screams only seemed to infuriate the bear as it continued chewing through her scalp, digging its sharp teeth to within two millimetres of piercing through her skull and into her brain. She tried to fight, covering her head with her right hand.

But the bear crunched into her hand - breaking the bones, severing the tendons and slicing into the muscle.
Baron raced outside their cabin with a .22 long rifle and took aim, but he couldn't get a clear shot. The bear's head was moving furiously over his wife's head, and he didn't want to risk shooting his wife by mistake.

He aimed instead at the animal's hind legs and pulled the trigger. Nothing. The rifle had jammed. Baron ran into the cabin for a second hunting rifle as the bear clawed his wife's back to within a centimetre of her spine, dragging her toward the bushes.

"I refuse to be killed by you," Annanack thought to herself, wrestling the bear. "Jesus," she prayed, "help me."

Baron returned with a smaller rifle, steadying himself before pulling the trigger. He aimed at the hind legs.

A shot echoed in the wilderness as the bear slumped to the ground. Baron fired a second shot into its head, killing the beast instantly.

Baron carried his wife into the cabin as she bled profusely. No one was answering the two-way radios that night. He urged her to stay awake, to sit up, as he dressed her wounds with wet rags to staunch the bleeding.

Doctors will tell you that head and hand wounds are among the most painful. Annanack stayed up that night with no painkillers, and in the morning, they radioed for help. A nurse and other villagers canoed up to the remote campground.

A helicopter later transported her to the town of Kuujjuaq, the largest Inuit community in northern Quebec. The following day, a plane flew her to Montreal, where she underwent emergency surgery at the Montreal General Hospital by a Harvard-trained plastic surgeon with sub-specialties in micro-surgery as well as hand surgery.

The surgeon, Lucie Lessard, peered over Annanack's head in the operating room. Her scalp dangled in flaps around the crown of her head, revealing tissue that had turned blue from a lack of blood supply. Lessard could also glimpse what looked like drill holes, but were actually the polar bear's teeth marks, in the bone of Annanack's skull.

The Montreal General's Level One trauma team had already stabilized Annanack. For the next six hours, Lessard operated on the woman, hoping to save that dying tissue on the top of her head.

Lessard, chief of plastic surgery at the McGill University Health Centre, was being assisted by an anesthetist, nurses and three surgical residents, Ali Izadpanah, Chadwick Wu and Thomas Constantinescu.

When Wu, who obtained his medical degree in San Francisco, learned a polar bear victim had been wheeled into the OR, his first thought was: Had this woman been to a zoo?

Lessard ordered complete silence as she sat in front of a microscope to view Annanack's head, reconnecting a severed temporal artery to re-establish blood and oxygen flow to the bluish tissue. The micro sutures Lessard used to stitch the artery were thinner than a human hair.

Lessard reattached the scalp flaps to Annanack's head before turning her attention to the hand. Slowly, delicately, Lessard repaired the broken bones in the hand as well as the tendon and muscle tissue damage.

Lessard saved the back for last, since it posed the least immediate danger to Annanack's life, although the bear's bites were within a centimetre of having paralyzed her. The operation was over, and Annanack was given antibiotics to guard against a bacterium that bears carry that can cause infections in human bones.
Wednesday, less than a month later, Annanack was recovering on the 19th floor of the Montreal General, staring out the window at the green treetops of Mount Royal. Lessard dropped by to check on her. To the surgeon's surprise, Annanack's thick black hair had grown back quickly, almost covering the stitches criss-crossing her head.

Annanack was asked how she felt.
"I'm okay, but I'm not feeling my best," she said softly.

Lessard reminded Annanack just how strong she was to have survived the attack, to have shown so much courage.
"You did a great job on me," Annanack told her surgeon. "I don't know what would have happened if I didn't come here."

As part of the mission of the MUHC, the hospital network treats the Inuit of Nunavik, a source of pride for Lessard.

They spoke a little about life in Nunavik and about global warming.
"The ice is melting faster these days," Annanack said, "and when the ice is too far out from the shore, the polar bears go hunting on the land."

To Annanack's knowledge, her injuries are the first time a polar bear has attacked a human in the Kangiqsualujjuaq area, although there have been a few close calls.

Lessard turned to leave; she had other patients to see. The two women smiled at each other.

Annanack is expected to regain most of the movement in her hand with the help of physiotherapy.

Once in the hallway, Lessard paused and reflected on the operation, one so technically challenging and unusual that it will be written up for a medical journal.
"Sometimes, you're so busy that you don't get to feel any satisfaction," Lessard said.
"But yes, I guess we are satisfied with the outcome."

Search for Franklin's lost ships well worth the investment

Globe and Mail – August 27, 2012

On first glance, investing in the search for two ships that disappeared 164 years ago during Sir John Franklin's doomed Arctic expedition might seem a questionable idea in an era of fiscal restraint. But with much of the fieldwork already completed, and with the assistance of private funders, the federal government's $275,000 contribution to the search for HMS Erebus and HMS Terror ships begins to make much more sense.

Not only does this mission, led by Parks Canada's underwater archeology team, show the government's commitment to the north and to uncovering a national historic site, it could also help Canada to assert its sovereignty in the Arctic.

If the Northwest Passage becomes a navigable sea route, what better way for Canada to claim it than to be engaged in scientific research there, and to establish a presence in those waters?

The wreckage of the lost ships is also an important Canadian narrative - one that has inspired songs, novels and poems, not to mention countless expeditions and search parties.

Franklin, a British explorer, and his 128 men left England in 1845 in search of a navigable route through the Northwest Passage between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The ships, stocked with provisions for three years, became trapped in ice near King William Island in 1846. Following the death of Franklin and 23 of his crew, the survivors made a misguided attempt to march south to a fur-trading post on the mainland. All ended up dying, and neither their bodies nor the ships were ever found.
Still, the expedition, as well as the subsequent search parties, helped cement Britain’s claim over the Arctic - a claim inherited by Canada.

Using sonar, airbourne technology and an underwater vehicle from the University of Victoria’s ocean technology lab, the mission will focus on the Victoria Strait/Alexandra Strait region, as well as the southern region of O’Reilly Island, in Nunavut. According to Inuit legend, this is where one of the ships was last seen. The team will also help the Canadian Hydrographic Service to map the Arctic sea floor. This unfinished chapter in polar exploration has long captured imaginations. The discovery of the ships would shed new light on the cause of the untimely death of Franklin and his men, bringing closure to an enduring mystery, and greater profile to Canada’s north and its people.

We must keep exploring
Ottawa Citizen – August 27, 2012

The Conservative government’s recommitment to the search for the lost ships of the Franklin expedition might be romantic, but it isn’t frivolous. From a scientific and fiscal perspective, the small public investment is prudent. Besides, this quest has always been part of how we define ourselves as a frontier country.

The fact that Canada is still willing to search for Franklin is at least as important as whether we ever find him.

And John Franklin’s failure — the very fact that the ships were lost — may have been his greatest contribution to Canada. It gave us a reason to search.

In his book From Far and Wide: A Complete History of Canada’s Arctic Sovereignty, Peter Pigott points out that the initial loss of the Erebus and Terror sparked a flurry of exploration. By 1854, there were 22 expeditions: “Ships were now searching for ships that were searching for Franklin who had been searching for the Northwest Passage. But because of this, one half of the Canadian Arctic, including three possible Northwest Passages, had been mapped out in the search for Franklin. More importantly with exploration, mapping, planting of flags, and building of cairns, Britain could legitimately lay claim to the Arctic — and pass it to Canada.”

The collateral consequences of exploration are sometimes the most lasting and meaningful. Franklin didn’t set out to perish and inspire centuries of speculation. Columbus didn’t set out to add continents to European world maps.

The same is true of space exploration. Sending humans into space has a romantic appeal, but it also makes new technologies necessary. Those technologies, and their thousands of spinoffs, have made life better on Earth, from better breathing equipment for firefighters to artificial heart pumps. The late Neil Armstrong expanded the boundaries of the known when he stepped onto the surface of the moon; the space program also expanded the boundaries of the possible, on Earth and in space.

In the 19th century, the search for Franklin solidified, in a very practical sense, Canada’s commitment to the North. That holds true today. A sonar search of the sea bed could add to our store of knowledge of the region even if it doesn’t turn up the ships we’re looking for.

A research team testing sonar equipment near Greenland recently turned up — by accident — what seems to be the wreck of the Terra Nova, the ship that carried the doomed Scott expedition to the Antarctic. There are mysteries down there. If we want to understand our territory and our history, we have to keep exploring.
Canada’s place in the mystical North
Ottawa Citizen – August 27, 2012
Colin Robertson
Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s annual tour, coincident with the Canadian Forces’ Operation Nanook, guarantees that, at least for a week, southern Canada looks to our North. This year the western scenario of the Forces exercise involved a barge carrying toxic chemicals colliding with a ferry shuttling travellers across the Mackenzie River, obliging the evacuation of Tsiigehtchic. Last year, the scenario involved a plane accident that sadly turned to reality with the First Air flight crash near Resolute Bay.
In situations such as this, while the civil authorities lead, as we have witnessed through disasters in the south, be it forest fires, ice storms or hurricanes, it is our Forces that have the necessary capacity to support and respond to environmental and other calamities. Operation Nanook is the most visible of ongoing exercises directed from Joint Task Force North in Yellowknife.
Critics describe these activities as “militarization” of our North. They are wrong.
We face no imminent threat to our Arctic sovereignty. The real challenges — bears and black flies, ice, cold and permafrost — are the same that confronted explorers such as Alexander Mackenzie and Sir John Franklin. These exercises are more about safety and security than defence. They are about useful tasks such as landing an RCAF Twin Otter, the “farm truck” of the North, on the Dempster Highway.
Historically, our attention to the North has been mostly in reaction to American interests, real or imagined. The Second World War gave us a highway to link Alaska with the lower 48 states. The Cold War created a dotted network of radar stations — the DEW line — that on the map gave the appearance of presence, however illusory. The SS Manhattan’s 1969 voyage through the Northwest Passage sparked a debate around the right of passage.
American interest has also been a driver for economic development from the Gold Rush to the Mackenzie Valley pipeline. The former obliged us to provide order, through our Mounties and territorial government. The pipeline proposal sparked the Berger Commission that put a moratorium on development. It served as an impetus for the negotiation of northern land claims allowing aboriginal peoples to take greater control of their lands and lives.
Local governments have spawned economic development agencies such as the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation, chaired by former NWT premier Nellie Cournoyea. These kind of institutions, administered by and for northerners, that will be best equipped to deal with sustainability and address the social ills: drug addiction; alcoholism; and a suicide rate five times that in the south.
Hunting and fishing will always be part of northern tradition and way of life, but there is a recognition that change is coming because of rising temperatures and technological innovation giving greater access to the riches of the North. There is a determination an economic base providing jobs with a future, that goes beyond tourism. This puts a premium on education. It also means, as recommended recently by the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, welcoming investment and resource development on the basis of full partnership.
Industry should consult the Canadian Forces, which have both practical experience and expertise in dealing with northerners and their unique governance structure. The Canadian Rangers, for example,
successfully draw on the talent of northerners in service of their communities as well as the Canadian Forces.

For Canadians, the North has a mystical appeal. Space seems infinite while time is measured less by the clock than by the sun and the seasons.

With most of us huddled within a hundred miles of the 49th parallel, our real frontier — north of 60 — is a place where the population is smaller than Prince Edward Island’s. The land mass — 40 per cent of Canada — is bigger than Europe. The cultural and demographic differences between the territories — in the Northwest Territories, for example, there are 11 official languages — obliges patience. Building trust takes time.

We come from all corners of the globe but geography and climate define us as people of the north. We correctly celebrate our “true north strong and free” in our art and literature.

We may think we know all we need to know about the North.

We don’t.

Yet we do have experts in our universities, within industry and the public service. Connecting these dots of knowledge and creating more Canada Research Chairs devoted to study of the North would be useful initiatives by the Conservative government. We could use this expertise as we re-take the chair of the Arctic Council in 2013.

Initiated as a “high-level forum” through the Ottawa Declaration in 1996, the eight-nation Arctic Council is useful. It was the catalyst for the 2011 search and rescue mutual co-operation agreement.

We should use our two-year term as chair to give a voice, as observers, to other nations with northern interests, especially China, whose goods will eventually transit polar routes. The inevitable opening of new sea lanes is another incentive to get moving with the construction of our icebreakers and Arctic patrol ships.

It’s also a reminder to avoid the folly of flag-waving, especially as we prepare to submit our extended continental shelf claim to the UN. The brouhaha with Denmark over Hans Island and then that created when the Russian submersible Artika planted a flag near the North Pole in 2007 are less diplomatic crisis than opera bouffe.

To prevent such silliness from escalating, let’s institutionalize the meetings at the chief-of-staff level begun in Goose Bay earlier this year by General Walter Natynczyk.

There is a map in Inuvik airport of the circumpolar region. Sitting atop the world it is a graphic reminder that Canada has both place and stature in the North. Let’s continue to exercise it.

A former diplomat, Colin Robertson is vice-president of the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute and a senior adviser to McKenna, Long and Aldridge LLP. He recently spent a week near Inuvik embedded with Operation Nanook.

CIRCUMPOLAR NEWS

Arctic summit closes on reminders of slow development, potentially rapid change

Alaska Dispatch – August 27, 2012
Craig Medred

The Arctic Imperative Summit wrapped up in Girdwood Monday with an illustration of how slowly things move in the Far North and a warning about how quickly that could change.

As former North Slope Borough Mayor Edward Itta pointed out in closing remarks, the Sioux Indians roamed the North American Great Plains in much the same way for thousand of years until the
westward rush of development overran and swamped them. That was more than 100 years ago, and the Lakota have never fully recovered. "I'd like to talk to you very briefly about Sitting Bull," the great Sioux chief, said Itta, an Inupiat Eskimo. "He would never sign a treaty."

Sitting Bull did not sign because he knew that if he was to sign away the right to roam the Plains in search of buffalo, the future of his people would be forever changed. But Sitting Bull's tribe was conquered and suffered.

Itta conceded that it was probably a good thing Alaska Natives avoided a similar fate by resolving their claims to all of Alaska with the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in 1971. It created 12 regional Native corporations and awarded them title to 40 million acres of Alaska. In addition, they got a total of nearly $450 million in cash to aid in the formation of businesses to help provide jobs for Native people.

This social experiment is ongoing, but in general it appears to have benefited Natives in Alaska more than the reservation system benefited Natives in the Lower 48 states. The corporations have been generally profitable, and a generation of Native leaders have now cut their teeth on dealing in the world of corporate capitalism. Looking west from his Barrow home toward the empty horizon these days, Itta said he sees "the likelihood for very large gas and oil discoveries into the Chukchi Sea."

Barrow Natives want to be involved in any business that goes on there, he said, and offered what officials of Royal Dutch Shell might take as a stark warning.

"I don't believe the lands claim (act) extinguished" claims to the aboriginal waters off the coast, Itta said. No plans are afoot to stall drilling with a lawsuit, but he hinted that if the federal government doesn't make some accommodation for tribes in any offshore development, that could happen. The federal government is now the big beneficiary of taxes on offshore oil. Others speaking here over the weekend point out that federal revenues from offshore oil and gas development, primarily in the Gulf of Mexico, are second in size only to income taxes.

Any legal action by Alaska Natives aimed at gaining a chunk of that revenue would, of course, make life even more difficult for Shell, which is already in legal-political war with environmentalists as it tries to pursue exploratory drilling offshore. Itta said he was aware business interests would probably not be happy to hear what he was saying.

"They didn't take kindly for the push for land claims a few years ago," either, he added.

Itta argued for some sort of cash settlement and marine reserves to protect the "natural capital" of whales around which Inupiat culture revolves. Whale hunting, he said, is "key to our culture ... (and) there's no question we have to have cash ... We can't go backward. We know that." Fuel now powers both the subsistence and cash economies in northern Alaska.

Itta's presentation drew a standing ovation from the crowd before Iceland President Olafur Ragnar Grimsson followed him to the podium to underline a couple things.

**Past mistakes, present gaps**

"We have to create a mechanism to have a formal impact," he said. "These mistakes have been made before."

Unless Arctic interests find a way to work together, he said, they are likely to continue struggling along to struggle until comes the new economic dawn that overruns them. There seems little doubt in anyone's mind that a world oil crisis can start a stampede toward the Arctic, which is believed to hold the last great pools of oil. They remain beneath the ground now, with a few key exceptions such as Prudhoe Bay, primarily because development costs are so high, which is the big problem of the moment for every business in the Arctic, from minerals to tourism to fishing to local government.
Nome mayor Denise L. Michels told the conference of the famous, old mining community is now within about 600 feet and $40 million of completing the first deep-water port in Northwest Alaska. It wouldn't be much, simply a place to dock an ocean-going ship. Those vessels need 35 feet of water to operate. Nome has extended its breakwaters to enclose an area down to minus-22 feet, Michels said, "so we're a little short."

But a tanker that broke ice to deliver fuel to the community this winter, an incident that attracted national attention, showed that deep water was closer than officials had thought. "Our charts were outdated," Michels said. Government nautical surveys are rarely done in the Arctic, but Nome now has real-world knowledge of the water conditions.

"We don't have much farther to go to reach minus 35," she said. She hopes the journey to minus-35 is faster than the trip to minus-22.

Discussion of a port in Nome, a regional hub, started 100 years ago. Work on a causeway, which was to have stretched 3,600 feet in to the sea but now only goes 2,712 feet, began in 1985. Progress at the moment, moves at a glacial pace in the Arctic. Many think that given the economic, regulatory and physical climates, things could remain that way for decades.

But nobody is dismissing the possibility of a sudden change.

It is 4,000 miles shorter to ship products between Europe and Asia via the Northern Sea Route, across the top of Russia, than to send them on the long trip south to the Suez Canal and around India to the east. The Arctic Ice Cap shrank to a record low this year. The Arctic Ocean appears to be going ice-free. If that truly were to happen, the whole region could change radically almost overnight.

**Saving the Arctic is environmentalism's biggest challenge yet**

Guardian – August 24, 2012

Greenpeace needs the support of millions if it is to save the Arctic from destruction by the oil industry. This month we are expecting to see a record ice melt in the Arctic. But this is not a world record we can celebrate. This is a wake-up call from planet Earth. Just 30 years ago, the Arctic Ocean ice cap covered an area roughly the size of Australia. Within a few decades, it will almost certainly disappear completely for the summer months. This will be the first time a seasonally ice-free Arctic Ocean has existed for many thousands of years. The Earth without the white area at the top of the world will look radically different from those first photographs we took of our home planet from space just four decades ago.

Those first pictures of the tiny, vulnerable, yet beautiful Earth led in part to the environmental movement. And now this movement has to dramatically change gear in response to what is happening. The Arctic is home to millions of people, including Inuit whose ancestors first settled thousands of years ago. It is also a unique ecosystem, home to some of the most extraordinary species on Earth, from the narwhal to the walrus to the polar bear. For hundreds of other migratory species, including humpback whales and Canada geese, it is a vital summer feeding ground. The amazing Arctic also plays a critical role in regulating our climate. The Arctic sea ice is like a giant mirror that reflects much of the sun's energy, helping to keep our planet cool. The formation of Arctic sea ice produces dense salt water which sinks, helping drive the deep ocean currents. Without the ice, this delicate balance will be upset and could cause profound regional and global climatic changes.

We all rely on the Arctic for our survival. And now we are in danger of losing one of the world's great ecosystems and an important life support system leaving all species facing an increasingly insecure and uncertain future.

But paradoxically, right now, no species will profit from it as much as the one causing it: humans. Oil companies do not like to talk about this. But at this moment, energy companies like Shell are preparing
to invade areas of the Arctic Ocean that were once protected by the ice. They're desperate to claim the oil that lies beneath the seabed, so they can make more money, by burning more fuel, and melting more ice. It's a vicious circle driven by greed.

But we know that, sooner or later, we are going to have to move on to some other source of energy that isn't oil. This is inevitable.

The oil that flows from beneath the Arctic Ocean is destined to run out. It only holds three years' worth of global supply. If there was an oil spill, similar to the Exxon Valdez or Deepwater Horizon, it could be catastrophic for Arctic marine life.

We should now declare the destruction of such a unique place as an act of vandalism on an unprecedented scale and take action to stop it. And we must also invest in new, greener sources of energy and energy efficiency.

There must be a global sanctuary declared in the High Arctic and the Arctic Ocean made off limits to the oil industry and unsustainable, high impact, industrial fishing. We have developed a plan that can make this a reality if millions of people join us.

This is perhaps the environment movement's biggest challenge ever. But we've done it before. Just over 20 years ago, Antarctica was at risk from industrialisation and militarisation. Greenpeace led the campaign to protect it. We won that campaign.

And now we're determined to save the Arctic. We know this is a different fight, at a different time; not least because the Arctic is home to millions of people who have a critical say in the future of their region; and because the threat is not just from industrial development, but from the global crisis of climate change. But one critical factor remains the same: the united voice of millions of ordinary citizens can still be an irresistible agent of political change. This is a hugely ambitious campaign. That's why we need people and organisations around the world to help save the Arctic. Everyone has to grab this historic moment and reclaim the earth that belongs to us all.

**RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AND ENERGY NEWS**

**Harper sees job creation as key to solving Far North's problems**

*To combat harshness of life north of 60, Ottawa promotes natural resources development – and work it creates – as cure for what ails region*

Vancouver Sun – August 28, 2012

Barbara Yaffe

Stephen Harper shifted tone last week on his seventh annual foray to the Far North, talking less about national sovereignty and more about job creation.

With most Canadians aware the north is not under any great foreign threat, the PM used the trip to focus more on northerners, promoting his ubiquitous jobs and growth strategy.

The region, which accounts for 40 per cent of Canada's land mass, is becoming ever more high profile, with gradual melting opening up more economic opportunities.

Resource exploitation, tourism and shipping are set to expand, and are bound to shine a bigger spotlight on those living in the region.

Northern residents are spread out across a vast terrain, with a population no bigger than that of Kelowna, at 117,000. More than half are aboriginal.
In a news release last week, Liberals attacked Harper's annual northern visits: "Year after year this prime minister uses the north as a backdrop for Arctic sovereignty and military procurement," said Liberal Northern Development critic Carolyn Bennett.

"Yet he continually fails to make any headway on the real issues facing Canada's northern communities." It only makes political sense for the Conservative government to start addressing the northern needs.

In past years Harper's chest-thumping announcements have related more to macro than micro projects - a deep-water port for Nanisivik, polar icebreakers, an expanded contingent of Armed Forces Rangers. That sort of thing.

And several of these sovereignty-related projects have been delayed by budget restrictions and other complications, over time hurting the government's credibility and diminishing the political value to be derived from such big-ticket ventures.

Last week Harper focused more on the nitty gritty of creating jobs for northerners.

Visiting a copper-gold mine in Yukon, Harper brought his jobs-and-growth mantra north, saying Conservatives are "committed to promoting social and economic development" in the region.

Conservatives want to ensure "that northerners benefit from the tremendous natural resource reserves that are found in the region."

The mining and energy sectors account for 25 per cent of territorial GDP, employing 5,000 northerners. At present some 38 resource development projects are awaiting regulatory approval with the promise of an additional 8,000 jobs.

Harper also announced between 35 and 50 new jobs by 2017 at a proposed research station in Cambridge Bay.

And boundaries of a new national park announced by the PM, were drawn to enable adjacent resource development to occur.

Conservatives clearly prefer to deploy job creation as a means of helping northerners rather than pouring funds into the region in a Kelowna Accord-type of approach.

That northerners need assistance is not in dispute. A 2008 Library of Parliament report by Tonina Simeone provides insight into the harshness of life north of 60.

Northerners have higher mortality and suicide rates, and lower education and income levels.

The Simeone report says the suicide rate among Inuit people is 11 times the national average; life expectancy is 15 years lower than for other Canadians; 68 per cent of aboriginals in the north don't finish high school.

Living costs in the north are onerous. A jar of Cheez Whiz or a four-litre container of milk can cost $20. And, worryingly, climate change is starting to complicate life for many northerners, particularly those reliant on hunting.

In 2011 the Harper government introduced Nutrition North Canada to subsidize healthy eating while earlier this year it unveiled a Northern Adult Basic Education program.

And as part of its Northern Strategy announced in 2009, Conservatives created a new northern regional development agency.

Such initiatives reflect smart politics, a recognition that sovereignty is about more than just policing the Northwest Passage.
Time to look north for opportunities

Edmonton more than a gateway, says chair of upcoming conference

Edmonton Journal – August 28, 2012
Gary Lamphier

Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s bullish views on the North - which he outlined again last week, during his annual summer northern trek - sets the stage for a key coming event in Edmonton.

About 400 political and business leaders are gearing up for the 2012 Meet The North conference in about five weeks’ time. The event will take place at the Marriott River Cree Resort Oct. 3-5.

It’s the first time the triennial event will be held in our city since 2009. Sister conferences were held in Yellowknife and Whitehorse over the past two years.

Alberta Premier Alison Redford and Northwest Territories Premier Bob McLeod have already confirmed their participation in the gathering, which is being organized by the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce.

"We’re also hoping to confirm Yukon Premier Darrell Pasloski for the premiers’ luncheon, and the premier of Nunavut (Eva Aariak), but I don’t know where that stands right now," says Ken Barry, chairman of the Edmonton chamber.

"The conference dovetails nicely with the prime minister’s recent trip north, so we'll be highlighting the opportunities that exist with the huge number of resource-based developments that are proposed in the North. But we will also hear about the challenges there from an infrastructure standpoint."

Since Edmonton is home to many of the country’s largest engineering and construction firms, Barry says the conference will give them a great opportunity to forge relationships with prospective northern partners.

Stantec CEO Bob Gomes, who will chair the conference, says it’s time for Edmonton to recognize that it’s an integral part of the North, and not merely a staging centre or transit stop on the way to the North.

"We used to be known by a lot of people as the Gateway to the North, but given our importance to the North and our connections to it, Edmonton is a northern city. We’re not the Gateway to the North — we’re part of the North," he says.

"So I think we’ve got to embrace that, and our connection to what is an incredible opportunity for Canada if not the world, with all the resources that are up there."

Gomes, who worked in the North while studying for his engineering degree at the University of Alberta, says Stantec is active in all three northern territories.

"We acquired a firm in Yellowknife and Whitehorse and Iqaluit last year. I was up there visiting their offices. So it’s a part of the country a lot of Canadians don’t appreciate, but it’s an area that has huge value, as the prime minister says."

The conference agenda will focus on the impact of an evolving global economy on the North; the role of innovation and research; and the challenges and opportunities posed by northern development.

Other featured speakers include:
- Elyse Allan, CEO of GE Canada, who will talk about investing in Canada’s remote communities;
- Axel Meissen, chairman of Foresight, Alberta Innovates, Technology Futures, who will offer a futuristic view of the North in 2050;
- Gary Klassen, Edmonton’s general manager of planning and development, and Reg Milley, CEO of Edmonton International Airport, who will discuss the city’s future as an economic centre;

In addition to the above, other featured speakers will include David Ramsay, NWT’s Minister of Industry, Tourism and Investment; Andrew Clark, executive chairman of Edmonton-based Clark Builders; Melissa

Chamber News Briefs 16
Blake, mayor of Wood Buffalo; Roy Erasmus, CEO of De'ton Cho Corp; and National Bank Financial's Angus Watt, who serves as honorary consul for the Netherlands.

**Environmental review [NICO] begins amid questions**

CBC News – August 27, 2012

A critical part of the review of the NICO project in the Northwest Territories won't be part of the public hearings on the project this week.

Fortune Minerals wants to build the gold, cobalt, copper and bismuth mine on Tlicho lands about 160 kilometres northwest of Yellowknife, 50 kilometers from Whati.

The Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board is holding hearings in Wha Ti, Yellowknife and Behchoko. But Grand Chief Eddie Erasmus said a key study won’t be done in time.

“We were hoping our traditional knowledge would be on an equal footing with modern science, but it's unfortunate that's not coming out until September,” Erasmus said.

The hearings begin Monday in Wha Ti. On Wednesday they move to Yellowknife. People in Behchoko will get a chance to have their say on the project on Thursday and Friday.

According to Fortune Minerals, the project holds a host of benefits for the Tlicho. The mine would create hundreds of jobs, as well as business opportunities, for 19 years or more.

Erasmus said his people are more interested in its environmental impacts.

“It's actually in the heart of Tlicho lands, so that’s a great concern. It's a main transportation route to get to all of the Tlicho communities,” he said. “That's where we do our hunting, trapping and fishing, that's where we get our water from.”

The hearings are also proceeding without plans for an all-weather road to Wha Ti, something Fortune needs to truck its metals out.

**ENVIRONMENT NEWS**

**Axing reviews not a solution**

Star Phoenix – August 27, 2012

It's one thing for the federal government to listen to lobbying by resource development companies and other industry groups to streamline the environmental review process of projects to make it more efficient.

That doesn't mean, however, that the proper response is to scrap the reviews altogether, or for the federal government to wash its hands of the responsibility by turning it over to the provinces or other agencies that are going through their own budget restructuring processes, which have an impact on their capacity to conduct reviews.

News last week that the federal Conservative government's wide-ranging budget legislation has forced the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency to cancel screenings into the potential environment damage from nearly 3,000 projects across the country doesn't do much for Canada's international image or inspire confidence among citizens that their interests are being protected.

Of the 2,970 projects whose review was halted by provisions of the omnibus legislation that changed national environmental laws and eroded federal oversight of industrial development 638 were in Saskatchewan.

The cancelled reviews in this province range from relatively small projects such as building well-side access roads and emergency repairs to a sewage pumping station at a First Nation, to adding pipeline
rights of way, expanding sewage lagoons, monitoring for avian flu by collecting swab samples from Arctic nesting geese, to even expanding Areva Resources' tailings pond at McLean Lake by 4.5 million cubic metres to extend its life by 25 years.

As Bram Noble, a University of Saskatchewan geography professor with experience in conducting national environmental assessments told The StarPhoenix on Friday, the decision to scrap the assessments is an unprecedented step backward and "a lot to be concerned about."

While the federal government counters that it's acting to make the process more efficient by removing overlapping environmental reviews, the overall signal being sent is that the entire process is being weakened to accommodate industry interests. It's something only reinforced by the Harper government's recent decision to reduce the number of scientists in key departments such as Fisheries and Oceans and by its well-earned reputation for muzzling the experts in its employ.

That the government's budget bill authorizes water pollution, weakens protection of threatened species, restricts public participation in reviews of industrial projects and subjects environmental groups to investigations merely adds context in assessing its decision that all 3,000 reviews are unnecessary.

The stance taken by federal Environment Minister Peter Kent at this summer's Rio+20 Summit, where he said Canada is a victim of "misinformation and mischaracterization" when it comes to balancing economic development needs with environmental policy, is indicative of a government mindset that doesn't seem to connect its actions with the consequences they bring.

He invited Canadian and international media to "take a good look at our domestic policies" in assessing this country's responsible resource development. A good look at these cancelled reviews does little to dispel the notion that the scales are tipped to one side.

The editorials that appear in this space represent the opinion of The StarPhoenix. They are unsigned because they do not necessarily represent the personal views of the writers. The positions taken in the editorials are arrived at through discussion among the members of the newspaper's editorial board, which operates independently from the news departments of the paper.

**Federal science cuts threaten facilities**

Postmedia – August 28, 2012

Mike De Souza

A $1.3-million reduction in federal research funds will jeopardize $81 million worth of investments in eight facilities that have trained or employed nearly 2,000 scientists, technicians and researchers, but are now at risk of shutting down, says a new report to be released on Tuesday by the federal New Democrats.

"It does seem reckless," said the NDP's science and technology critic Kennedy Stewart in an interview Monday. "It's really a shame that the government didn't consult more before they cut this funding because this research isn't going to happen in these facilities any more."

The research report, titled Penny-wise, Pound Foolish, was based on surveys of 39 different facilities that received funding through a $35-million support program for operating costs. Twenty-eight of the facilities agreed to participate in the survey, which asked them to outline capital investment, jobs, training and research in their facilities and the impact of reductions in federal support.

Eight of those facilities told the suburban Vancouver MP that their survival was now in jeopardy, including the National High Field Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Centre, the National Ultrahigh-Field NMR Facility for Solids, the Canadian Centre for Isotopic Microanalysis, the Canadian Charged Particle Accelerator Consortium and the Advanced Laser Light Source.
"Surviving facilities will have to fire staff and reduce services, with many unable to repair or upgrade multi-million dollar equipment," said Stewart's report.

Three of the eight facilities at risk asked to remain anonymous, fearing repercussions for speaking out about the moratorium on new grants from the $35 million Major Resources Support Program.

One respondent in Stewart's report described the cuts as "a bullet to the head."

Gary Goodyear, the federal minister responsible for science and technology, was not immediately able to respond to questions about whether he was aware of the potential shutdown of the facilities identified in the report.

But in a statement emailed to Postmedia News, he noted that the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada's budgets for academic support have increased by $200 million since the Conservatives formed a government in 2006, suggesting that the council was responsible for allocating this funding.

"Scientists know that they can count on our government to make important investments that help create jobs, grow our economy, and improve the quality of life for all Canadians," said Goodyear in the e-mail.

Stewart's report said the consequences of the cuts would result in highly specialized equipment falling into disuse and a complete loss of specialized training, expertise and services.