

- Your Excellency Ambassador Heyman,
- Commissioner
- Premier,
- Chief Bill,
- Fellow parliamentarians,
- Representatives of the indigenous peoples of the North,
- Honoured guests:
- My name is David Tilson and I am a Member of the Canadian Parliament. It is my privilege as Co-Chair of the Conference and President of the Canada–Europe Parliamentary Association to welcome you all to the 11<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region.
- Before I begin my remarks, I would like to pass on regrets from Minister Aglukkaq who is not with us today.
- As you are no doubt aware, the Prime Minister of Canada made an important announcement this morning regarding the amazing discovery by a Canadian team of one of the two ships lost in 1846 during the expedition of Sir John Franklin to discover a Northwest Passage.
- This discovery solves part of a great mystery that has captivated the imagination of Canadians and been part of our heritage for more than 150 years.
- Minister Aglukkaq is responsible for the federal government agency, Parks Canada, that was one of the partners in this expedition, and she is Member of Parliament for the region in which the ship was found.
- As you can imagine, the Minister has been very busy preparing for this announcement, and is unable to join us at the Conference. She sends her best wishes to all of you for a productive Conference.
- The Conference is being held in the beautiful city of Whitehorse.
- It is the largest city in northern Canada and is built on the banks of the famous Yukon River, named after the former White Horse Rapids.

- These rapids were a major navigational obstacle on the Yukon River during the Klondike Gold Rush, and were named for their resemblance to the mane of a charging white horse.
- This region has been and still is home for several Indigenous peoples.
- The Southern Tutchone word for the rapids is Kwanlin, and the Southern Tutchone of the Whitehorse area call themselves Kwanlin Dün, or people of the rapids.
- Today, aside from the mining industry, whose history goes back to the gold rush of 1898, and which remains an economic driver for Whitehorse, the city is also home to several prominent Arctic research institutions.
- Honoured guests, the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region is very important as the only forum in the circumpolar Arctic that supports interparliamentary cooperation and the active involvement of Permanent Participants representing indigenous peoples and observers.
- Canada has been an active participant in the Conference since its inception in 1993, and hosted the Second Conference in Yellowknife in 1996.
- This year is, therefore, the second time that Canada hosts the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region.
- For Canada, the Conference and the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region represent an ideal forum for the exchange of ideas among circumpolar parliamentarians, Indigenous peoples and observers. As you know, Canada holds the chair of the Arctic Council until May 2015. The Conference and the Arctic Council maintain a long and deep relationship.
- The Conference provided key interparliamentary support to the Council prior to its creation through the Ottawa Declaration of 1996.
- For this 11<sup>th</sup> Conference, the themes that participants will address include:  
Sustainable Infrastructure Development;  
Governance Models and Decision-Making Processes;  
Responsible Resource Development and Capacity Building; and  
Environmental Challenges.

- All of these themes are in line with Canada's overarching priority as chair of the Council which is: "development for the people of the North."
- The Arctic region is unique and we all have the responsibility to help find and deliver practical solutions to address the wide ranging socio-economic and environmental challenges facing northern communities.
- These solutions can be achieved by examining issues from a northern perspective, maximizing northern engagement and prioritizing northern interests.
- So, thanking you all for your presence here. I know many of you have travelled a long distance.
- I am confident that your discussions during the days ahead will continue to help build the relationships and cooperation that are the hallmark of the Conference and the Standing Committee's work.
- I wish you all a successful Conference and once again warmly welcome you to Whitehorse.