



# Arctic Athabaskan Council

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Mr. Patrick Borbey  
Chair, Arctic Council Senior Arctic Officials

By Email

April 10, 2014

Dear Mr. Borbey,

It was a pleasure talking with you in Yellowknife last week at the meeting of the Senior Officials and Permanent Participants to the Arctic Council. Please let me offer my appreciation and congratulations for the logistics of the meeting, which as far as I could see, went off without a hitch. I cannot remember a better-organized meeting of the Council.

I am writing to you about one procedural and two substantial issues addressed in the Arctic Council plenary.

## **1. Observers.**

Several accredited state and non-state observers attended the Yellowknife session of the Sustainable Development Working Group immediately before the SAO meeting. The SDWG Chair invited them to address the working group at the end of the meeting and several took advantage of this opportunity and provided information and perspectives that we found to be quite helpful. I think it would have been appropriate to provide accredited observers with the same speaking opportunity at the end of the SAO meeting. As you are aware, several of the accredited observers travelled thousands of kilometres to attend the SAO meeting. It seems to us at least a matter of courtesy that they be invited to address SAO meetings. We are not aware of any accredited observer having abused this privilege in the past. Moreover, providing our major Asian and European state observers with an opportunity to address the Council will help us to develop relations with them to address emissions released to the environment in temperate and tropical latitudes that impact the Arctic environment and threaten the health of the region's residents. Surely we should use the Council to build bridges. We hope that accredited observers will be invited to address the next and future SAO meetings under Canada's chairmanship.

## **2. Arctic Economic Council**

AAC was a firm supporter of the commitment in the Kiruna Declaration to "increase cooperation and interaction with the business community" by establishing a "Task Force to facilitate the creation of a circumpolar business

forum". We interpreted this as a commitment to establish a referral network to promote business and business contacts and, in particular, to open doors for northern and aboriginal businesses. With the approval by SAOs in Yellowknife of the document "Facilitating the Creation of the Arctic Economic Council" an institution is to be established that promises to be far more than a "business forum" and may in the long term compete with the Arctic Council itself. At the very least the public will be confused between the mandate and activities of the similarly named Arctic Council and Arctic Economic Council.

You will recollect that in response to a question from AAC, Mitch Bloom said the task force of which he was Chair felt that a "circumpolar business forum" was too "narrow" in scope hence the adoption in the report to SAOs of the title "Arctic Economic Council". The document approved by SAOs characterizes the overall aim of the Arctic Economic Council as "Fostering sustainable development, including economic growth, environmental protection and social development in the Arctic region". The final sentence of the document proposes that it address "responsible resource development". This is precisely the role and mandate of the Arctic Council pursuant to the 1996 Ottawa Declaration. We invite you to read, in particular, the third preambular and first operative paragraphs of the Ottawa Declaration to judge for yourself. Most of the state observers to the Arctic Council have or are gaining economic interests in the circumpolar world. Assuming the Arctic Economic Council lives up to its ambitious mandate it seems plausible that they will seek a relationship with the Arctic Economic Council potentially in preference to the Arctic Council. Of course, only time will tell.

The breadth of the Arctic Economic Council as articulated in the document approved by SAOs leaves us with the sense that the task force and the SAOs have departed from the expectations of ministers and instructions of the Kiruna Declaration and in so doing have failed to protect the Arctic Council's domain and domain name.

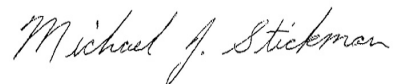
### **3. Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme**

Following the excellent presentation to SAOs and Permanent Participants by the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP), the US SAO said that Minister Aglukkaq has proposed that AMAP "shrink" its activities. The Canadian SAO responded that the Minister wants, rather, for AMAP and other working groups to "focus". As this debate continues we would bring to your attention two important points about AMAP. First, alone among the Council's working groups, AMAPs work has resulted in Arctic and aboriginal considerations being referenced in regional and global agreements, including the 1998 Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) to the UNECE Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution, and the 2001 Stockholm POPs Convention. AMAP had a key role in preparing the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, which continues to markedly influence the Council's policy and project agenda. These

examples illustrate a key fact: AMAP's scientific and assessment work is helping significantly to protect the health and welfare of northern aboriginal peoples. We want this to continue. Second, AMAP's current agenda stresses strategic issues such as ocean acidification and response to multiple sources and causes of environmental change. This work is hugely important in a global as well as Arctic context and AAC certainly wants this work to continue as well. This leads us to conclude that AMAP's agenda and activities should be reinforced and supported rather than reduced. We are not suggesting that AMAP or any working group be given free rein, but the suggestion that AMAP be shrunk and/or focused because SAOs are having difficulty managing this working group's many activities is not convincing. Neither are we convinced that scientists are suffering "fatigue" as a result of assisting AMAP, another reason offered in support of reducing AMAP's activities.

I hope these few comments are of assistance. Please direct the Arctic Council Secretariat to circulate this letter to the SAOs, Working Groups and Accredited Observers. We will circulate it to the Permanent Participants. My best personal regards.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael J. Stickman".

Michael Stickman  
International Chair  
Arctic Athabaskan Council

cc. Permanent Participants, SAOs, Working Groups and accredited Observers.