

**Model Arctic Council
Opening remarks by Premier Fentie
October 27, 2010
Whitehorse, Yukon**

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- Commissioner, Your Excellencies, Ambassadors, Senior Arctic Officials, Ranj Pillai - Deputy Mayor of Whitehorse, First Nation representatives, Observers, Permanent Participants, Chambers of Commerce, Yukon College representatives, delegates and of course, students. We are honoured to have you all here on this historic occasion.
- For some of you, this is your first time in the North. For others, this is your first time in Canada.
- I would like to recognize the good work and vision of the United Nations Association in Canada and commend them for bringing you together for this event.

Importance of youth engagement

- This is a once in a lifetime opportunity and the scale of this event is testament to the importance of engaging youth in international affairs.
- Over the next few days, your passion and voices will be vitally important, both from the perspective of those you represent on the council and how the work of the Arctic Council affects your future.
- You represent a unique point of view as well as the values and dreams of your generation.
- Climate change, melting sea-ice, melting permafrost and global economic interests are affecting the way we live and work in our northern communities.
- At the same time, changes in northern governance have created new ways of managing lands and resources in the North.

- Adapting to change is critical to our future.
- Working together and forming strong partnerships is fundamental to addressing northern and Arctic interests, both at home and abroad.
- You are the foundation of such future partnerships.
- Youth engagement is critical to the success of the North. Your opinions, ideas and yes, your criticisms are important in developing solutions at the regional, territorial, national and international circumpolar levels.
- It is vital that youth such as yourselves actively participate in forums such as this one. Your involvement brings promise for the future.
- This model council is important because it is bringing together youth who will be the leaders of tomorrow in a way that will help promote understanding and cooperation.
- In modeling the meetings of the Arctic Council and in discussing today's critical northern issues – such as climate change, health and energy – you are also gaining insight into the different perspectives and interests shaping the circumpolar world.
- All the governments, organizations and peoples represented in the Model Arctic Council share a common interest in seeing strong, healthy sustainable communities thrive in the Arctic region.
- This spring, my colleagues Premier Aariak, from Nunavut and Premier Roland, from the Northwest Territories and I, met with the Canadian Permanent Participants of the Arctic Council, who some of you will be representing over the next few days.
- Yukon is also working with regional governments in the Arctic, through our role as co-chair with Nunavut of the Northern Forum, an observer to the Arctic Council.
- We value the Arctic Council as a forum where northern governments, Permanent Participants, Observers and other stakeholders can peacefully and respectfully work together to address and ensure the protection and sustainable growth of this globally important region.

- As you know, Canada will be chairing the Arctic Council in 2013. This is an opportunity to ensure that Canada's Arctic foreign policy and its work at the Arctic Council align in positive ways with its domestic priorities and commitments.

Youth as torch bearers

- You are all here because you showed an interest in being here. You were chosen to participate in this unique gathering and you are ambassadors of your country.
- Make the most of this experience, share your knowledge, your understanding and continue these discussions in other venues.
- Make note of what you learn here and become a torch bearer of leadership and engagement, as well as a voice that speaks with knowledge about circumpolar issues.
- As you take note of what you learn, also take note of how you feel being a part of this forum, making contributions and working toward change and the future.
- You are all at a time of decision in your lives. I encourage you to remember this feeling and seek to maintain it. Do not make this a once in a lifetime experience, make it a career.
- Consider this opportunity a model for life-long learning and a chance to build better understanding between nations and a better society – in the circumpolar region as well as the world.