



Inuvialuit Regional Corporation

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The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

January 12, 2017

Dear Prime Minister,

Re: Response to US-Canada Joint Arctic Leaders' Statement

This letter comes in response to the Joint Arctic Leaders' Statement you delivered with President Barack Obama on Tuesday December 20, 2016 regarding offshore oil and gas activity in the Arctic. I read with particular interest, the decision to designate all Arctic Canadian waters as indefinitely off limits to future offshore Arctic oil and gas licensing, to be reviewed every 5 years through a climate and marine science-based life-cycle assessment. As you know, Inuvialuit have a significant interest in and constitutionally entrenched rights with respect to decisions that have a bearing on the Inuvialuit Settlement Region including offshore in the Beaufort Sea.

I remark with concern that INAC notified us about the Joint Statement only a short time prior to its release. We were not given enough time to prepare explanations for our beneficiaries or responses to media let alone inform your government about our views on the appropriateness and efficacy of the plans and decisions announced. This lack of meaningful communication is startling given your government's stated commitment to improved Inuit-Crown relationships. The contents of the Joint Statement relate intrinsically and significantly to our settlement region and our rights here. These rights require a balancing of interests, in which Inuvialuit must be involved for it to have meaning. Inuvialuit cannot support such unilateral decision-making. Indeed, it seems to be a step backward.

Setting this issue aside for the moment, Inuvialuit are encouraged by Joint Arctic Leaders' stated intention to ensure a strong, sustainable and viable Arctic economy and ecosystem, with low-impact shipping, science-based management of marine resources, which is free of the risks of offshore oil and gas activity. We are also pleased to have received confirmation from Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada officials that the Regional Strategic Environmental Assessment (RSEA) currently underway for the Beaufort-Delta region will

provide for the “climate and marine science-based life-cycle assessment” referenced in the statement.

Inuvialuit want to underscore that the RSEA is a truly welcome initiative that will benefit not only the residents here but others who draw benefits from the Beaufort-Delta region. The RSEA will form an essential part of any work to build a “strong, sustainable and viable Arctic economy and ecosystem”. It is my obligation to point out, however, that the funding that has been made available for this initiative may not be sufficient to support the achievement of its broad goals or the objectives identified in the Joint Statement.

In addition to continuing the essential work on the RSEA, we strongly urge the Government of Canada to take advantage of this opportune five-year period to work closely with Inuvialuit to develop an Arctic Policy Framework that achieves goals identified in the Joint Statement along with the constitutionally entrenched objectives of the Inuvialuit Final Agreement. As reminder, these are: to preserve Inuvialuit cultural identity and values, to enable Inuvialuit to be meaningful and equal participants in the northern and national economy and to protect and preserve the Arctic wildlife, environment and biological productivity. As Premier McLeod observed in a recent interview, “If oil and gas is shut down, then we need to look at diversifying our economies. And we need to have sustainable development in the North.”

I note that consultations are to be conducted through INAC and Natural Resources Canada with oil and gas companies during the first year of the five-year period to discuss their interests. The Inuvialuit have been gaining experience with oil and gas activity in the Beaufort since the 1960’s. Acknowledging this, we would request that Inuvialuit be included to a degree commensurate with our rights and interests in the Beaufort Sea in the consultation activities planned for the coming year with license holders. One of the elements of the negotiations required under the NWT Devolution Agreement is the treatment and management of resources in the off-shore. We would also request that Canada confirm the status in starting these negotiations and the impact of this designation on the negotiations to be conducted pursuant to the Devolution Agreement.

Sincerely,



Duane Ningaqsiq Smith
Chair and CEO

cc. The Honourable Bob McLeod, Premier, Northwest Territories
The Honourable Carolyn Bennett, Minister, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada
The Honourable Jim Carr, Minister, Natural Resources Canada