

# CANADA AND THE ARCTIC:

Selected Documents

---

# LE CANADA ET L'ARCTIQUE :

Sélection de documents



Historical Section  
Global Affairs Canada

---

Section des affaires historiques  
Affaires mondiales Canada



Global Affairs  
Canada

Affaires mondiales  
Canada

Canada



CANADA AND THE ARCTIC:  
Selected Documents

---

LE CANADA ET L'ARCTIQUE :  
Sélection de documents

Historical Section  
Global Affairs Canada

---

Section des affaires historiques  
Affaires mondiales Canada

FR5-106/2016

ISBN: 978-0-660-06343-0

Canada and the Arctic: Selected Documents = Le Canada et l'Arctique :  
Sélection de documents

Cover Photo: Bache Peninsula post under construction, Ellesmere Island, 1926  
(Library and Archives Canada, e010752413)

Photo de la couverture : Le poste de police en construction, presqu'île Bache,  
île d'Ellesmere, 1926 (Bibliothèque et Archives Canada, e010752413)

## Canada and the Arctic: Selected Documents

For almost fifty years, the Government of Canada has published *Documents on Canadian External Relations (DCER)* to chronicle the country's evolving international policies from the time of Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier at the turn of the twentieth century to that of Lester B. Pearson in the 1960s. The series currently includes 29 regular volumes containing over 20,000 documents, making it one of Canada's largest historical documentary projects.

A special volume in the series has recently been published. Titled *Documents on Canadian External Relations: The Arctic, 1874–1949*, this new volume covers a period of 75 years, from the earliest tentative beginnings of the Government of Canada's engagement with the Far North to the brink of major new geopolitical developments.

The regular volumes in the *DCER* series begin with the founding of the Department of External Affairs (now Global Affairs Canada) in 1909. At the time when the volumes for the years from 1909 until the Second World War were published, many Arctic files remained

## Le Canada et l'Arctique : Sélection de documents

Depuis près de cinquante ans, le gouvernement du Canada publie la série *Documents relatifs aux relations extérieures du Canada (DREC)*, qui documente l'évolution des politiques étrangères du Canada depuis le mandat du premier ministre sir Wilfrid Laurier, au tournant du vingtième siècle, jusqu'à celui du premier ministre Lester B. Pearson, dans les années 1960. Cette série comprend 29 volumes réguliers regroupant plus de 20 000 documents, ce qui en fait l'une des collections documentaires historiques les plus imposantes du Canada.

Un volume spécial de la série vient d'être publié, portant sur l'Arctique. Intitulé *Documents relatifs aux relations extérieures du Canada : L'Arctique, 1874-1949*, ce nouveau volume relate 75 années d'engagement du gouvernement du Canada dans le Grand Nord, depuis ses premières initiatives jusqu'aux nouveaux développements géopolitiques d'envergure.

Les volumes réguliers de la série DREC remontent à la création du ministère des Affaires extérieures

classified. The special volume is based on extensive research in Canadian, British and American archives, and it significantly expands the documentary record on this important subject in Canadian foreign policy. The documents include diplomatic correspondence, internal government memorandums, legal opinions, and instructions to and reports from official Canadian expeditions.

The volume is divided into six chronological parts: 1874–1897, 1898–1918, 1919–1924, 1925–1928, 1929–1939 and 1940–1949. This booklet reprints one document from each of these parts, illustrating the range of issues that concerned Canadian politicians and civil servants from the first decade after Confederation up to the early Cold War. The documents deal with such matters as the transfer of Arctic territory from Britain to Canada, official Canadian expeditions to the Arctic islands, the negotiations with Norway regarding the Sverdrup Islands and the 1944 voyage through the Northwest Passage of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police vessel *St. Roch*. Together, these historical records demonstrate the strength of Canada's title to its Arctic islands.

(maintenant Affaires mondiales Canada), en 1909. Au moment de la publication des volumes couvrant la période entre 1909 et la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, bon nombre des dossiers sur l'Arctique étaient alors classifiés. Le volume spécial sur l'Arctique, fruit de recherches exhaustives dans les archives canadiennes, britanniques et américaines, enrichit considérablement le corpus documentaire sur cet important volet de la politique étrangère du Canada. Au nombre des documents, mentionnons des notes diplomatiques, des notes de service internes du gouvernement, des avis juridiques, des directives à l'intention des expéditions canadiennes officielles ainsi que des rapports de ces expéditions.

Le volume se divise en six sections chronologiques (1874-1897, 1898-1918, 1919-1924, 1925-1928, 1929-1939 et 1940-1949). Dans la présente brochure est reproduit un document de chacune des sections, illustrant la variété des questions qui ont retenu l'attention des politiciens et des fonctionnaires canadiens pendant la première décennie suivant l'avènement de la Confédération jusqu'au début de la guerre froide. Les documents portent sur des sujets comme le transfert du territoire de l'Arctique de la Grande-Bretagne au Canada;

As with all DCER volumes, documents are printed in their original language, whether English or French. In regular volumes, errors of spelling or punctuation are silently corrected; in the special volume, these have generally been left unchanged. The editorial changes that have been made are placed within square brackets. A dagger (†) indicates a document that is not printed. The numbers provided for the documents are those used in the full collection.

les expéditions canadiennes officielles dans l'archipel Arctique canadien; les négociations avec la Norvège au sujet des îles Sverdrup; et l'expédition de 1944 du navire de la Gendarmerie royale du Canada le *St. Roch*, par le passage du Nord-Ouest. Dans leur ensemble, ces documents historiques témoignent avec éloquence des droits du Canada à l'égard de son archipel arctique.

À l'instar des autres volumes de la série DREC, les documents sont imprimés dans leur langue d'origine, en français ou en anglais. Dans les volumes réguliers, les fautes d'orthographe ou de grammaire sont discrètement corrigées; elles ne l'ont pas été dans ce cas-ci. Les modifications au texte original sont mises entre crochets. Un obèle (†) signale les documents qui n'ont pas été imprimés. Les numéros de documents correspondent à ceux qui sont utilisés dans la collection complète.

## 6.

### **Memorandum from Secretary of State to Privy Council**

### **Note du secrétaire d'État au Conseil privé**

[Ottawa,] 8<sup>th</sup> October 1874

The undersigned has the honor to submit for the consideration of the Honorable the Privy Council, that application having been made to the Imperial Authorities by M<sup>r</sup> William E. Mintzer of the Engineer Corps of the United States Navy for the purchase of a tract of land twenty miles square, on Cumberland Island, North of the Labrador Coast, facing Davis' Straits, and that an application having also been made by Mr A.W. Harvey of St Johns Newfoundland for the purpose of erecting temporary buildings on Cumberland Island with a view to carry on Fisheries in that locality[.]

The Right Honorable the Secretary of State for the Colonies in a despatch under date of 30 April last desires to be informed of the views of the Canadian Government as to the desirability of annexing to the Dominion of Canada those territories on the North American Continent lying to the Northward and adjacent to the Dominion, which though taken possession of in the name of the British Empire, have not hitherto been attached to any colony.

The time having arrived when it becomes necessary to exercise Governmental surveillance over these remote portions of the Continent, the undersigned is of opinion that it would be desirable to embrace the remaining parts of the continent, to the Northward, within the Boundaries of the Dominion, and [recommends] that Her Majesty's Government be advised that the Government of Canada is desirous of including within the boundaries of the Dominion the Territories referred to, with the islands adjacent.

R.W. Scott



**105.**

**Memorandum from Minister of the Interior to Deputy Minister**

**Note du ministre de l'Intérieur au sous-ministre**

Ottawa, 15<sup>th</sup> December, 1902.

Personal.

Mr Smart,

I have read over your report upon the subject of the attached papers. I note that your conclusions were arrived at after consultation with Mr. Fred. White, Commissioner McDougald of the Customs Department, Dr. Bell and Commander Spain.

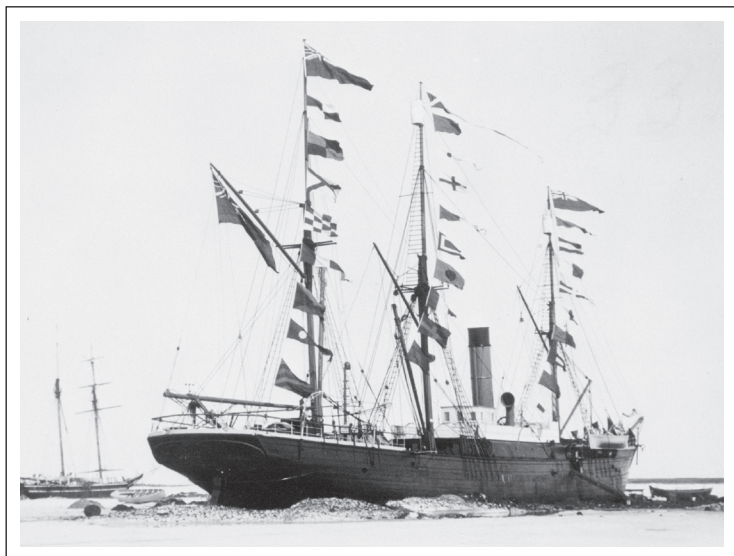
It seems quite clear that it is necessary for this Government to take immediate steps to establish such posts as may be necessary for the assertion of its authority over the territory in question[,] respecting the right to which there is of course no dispute. I think that two Commissioners should be appointed, one for that portion of the Territory which begins at the 141<sup>st</sup> Meridian in the Arctic Sea, and may be considered tributary to the mouth of the MacKenzie River. Either by a vessel going around through the Behring Straits or by an expedition down the MacKenzie River a post should be established and facilities provided for making customs collections.

My impression, which is subject to revision[,] is at the present time that a Police Officer and about five men should be detailed for the purpose of doing this work. The Police Officer should be appointed as Commissioner of the territory. He should also have the power of a Collector of Customs, a stipendary magistrate, etc. It would be desirable to have a surveyor with him so that exact topographical information might be gathered in regard to the territory without additional expense.

The territory at the north west corner of Hudson's Bay and the islands adjacent should be dealt with by an expedition sent around the coasts of Labrador and through Hudson's Straits. There should be upon this expedition an Officer of the Mounted Police who should be appointed Commissioner and Collector of Customs, four or five men, a surveyor, if possible qualified to take astronomical observations, and an Officer of the Geological Survey. One or more posts should be established.

Both expeditions should be conducted by the Marine & Fisheries Department as a part of its Coast service, and that Department should be charged with the duty of providing the necessary vessels, transport, provisions, etc. Descriptions to be inserted in the Commissions should be prepared by the Surveyor General [i]n consultation with Mr. King, the Astronomer, and Mr. White, the Geographer, and Dr Bell, who has made explorations in the territory in question. When the descriptions are prepared they should be forwarded to the Department of Justice with a request to prepare a draft Order in Council establishing the provisional districts, appointing the Commissioners[,] leaving the names blank, and providing the necessary legal authority for administration. Action should be taken at once. A careful estimate should be prepared of the expenditure so that it can be brought into the Supplementary Estimates for the present year, and the expedition started out as soon as the season permits in the Spring.

Clifford Sifton



SS *Neptune* at Fullerton (Hudson Bay), 1 July 1903 (Library and Archives Canada, C-001819)

Le vapeur *Neptune* à Fullerton (baie d'Hudson), 1<sup>er</sup> juillet 1903  
(Bibliothèque et Archives Canada, C-001819)

**226.**

**Memorandum from Surveyor General to Deputy Minister of the Interior**

**Note de l'arpenteur général au sous-ministre de l'Intérieur**

**Copy/ Copie**

[Ottawa,] October 29, 1920.

The Deputy Minister of the Interior [W.W. Cory], Ottawa.

Memorandum:

The Advisory Technical Board has passed several resolutions recommending immediate action with a view to defeating the alleged intention of the Government of Denmark to take possession, through Knud Rasmussen, of Ellesmere island in the Arctic Sea. The last resolution of the Board suggests a combined sea and aeroplane expedition immediately, or if it is found that a boat cannot navigate Baffin Bay now, the resolution recommends that the British Government be asked to transport the party by balloon from Scotland.

I wish to dissociate myself from these resolutions. From the information to which I have had access, I am satisfied that the alleged intention of Knud Rasmussen or of the Danish Government to occupy Ellesmere island or to establish a trading post on it has never existed, otherwise than in Mr. Stefanson's imagination. The wild schemes suggested for the immediate occupation of the island can only result, if they become known, in bringing ridicule over the Department.

Respectfully submitted,

[E. Deville]  
Surveyor General.

**387.**

**Note from Chargé d'affaires, Embassy of United Kingdom in United States, to Secretary of State, United States**

**Note du chargé d'affaires, ambassade du Royaume-Uni aux États-Unis, au secrétaire d'État, États-Unis**

British Embassy, Manchester, Mass.  
July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1925.

No. 676.

Sir,

In continuation of my note No. 627 of the 15<sup>th</sup> [ultimo], and in response to the specific enquiries contained in your note of the 19<sup>th</sup> ultimo, I have the honour to inform you that I have received the following particulars from the Governor General of Canada regarding posts of the Royal Canadian Mounted police established in Baffin and Ellesmere islands and other sections of the Canadian Northern territories:

A Mounted Police post in so far as buildings are concerned is composed of a small barracks to house members of the Force and separate buildings for storing supplies. In so far as personnel is concerned, each post is in charge of a non-commissioned officer with two or three constables for duty and patrols, and the necessary number of natives to act as dog drivers, guides and interpreters.

The Posts established in the Eastern Arctic Sub-District include the following:—

**Baffin Island**

- (1) Pangnirtung, Cumberland Sound,
- (2) Ponds Inlet, on the North end of the island.

**Devon Island**

- (1) Dundas Harbour.

## Ellesmere Island

(1) Craig Harbour, (South of the island)

(2) Rice's Strait, (near Cape Sabine).

All the above mentioned posts are permanently occupied by members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, with the exception of Rice's Strait, near Cape Sabine, where stores only have been placed, pending the arrival of buildings for a permanent post and personnel, which are being sent up this year.

The above Sub-District is in charge of a Commissioned officer of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who resides at any one of the posts, as circumstances demand. All the posts are visited once a year by the Commissioned Officer mentioned and by the officials of the Canadian Department of the Interior.

In regard to the duties of members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police stationed in the Eastern Arctic, it may be added that all the Mounted Police Detachments in the Eastern Arctic are Post Offices and Customs Ports, and the Non-Commissioned Officers in charge have been appointed Postmasters and Collectors of Customs.

Furthermore, the duties of members of the Force stationed in the Eastern Arctic include the supervision of the welfare of the Eskimo for the Department of Indian Affairs, educating them as far as possible in the White Man's Laws and issuing destitute relief where necessary, enforcement of all the Ordinances and Regulations of the Northwest Territories, including Game Laws and the protection of Musk Oxen, and the issue of Game, Animal and Bird Licenses to the various Trading Companies, the supervision of liquor permits, the enforcement of the Migratory Birds Convention Act for the Department of the Interior, the enforcement of the Criminal Code and Assistance to the Post Office and Customs Department, as set forth in the last paragraph above, as well as to the Department[s] of Mines and Agriculture in the collection of Eskimo material and ethnological and biological specimens.

Members of the Force are also called upon to assist in the taking of the Census and assisting the Director of Meteorological Service in the taking of readings at the different Posts from time to time, and to supply topographical information to the Federal Service.

In addition, Police patrols to surrounding settlements and Eskimo villages and also extended patrols to remote points are also made by each detachment for the purpose of obtaining the information required.

In bringing the above information to your notice, I have the honour to renew the assurance conveyed to you in my above mentioned note of the Canadian Government's readiness to afford the MacMillan expedition any assistance within the power of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the other Dominion officers in Canadian Northern territories.

I have the honour to be,  
with the highest consideration,  
Sir,  
Your most obedient,  
humble servant,  
[H.G. Chilton]

The Honourable Frank B. Kellogg,  
Secretary of State of the United States,  
Washington, D.C.

**494.**

**Memorandum from Director, Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch, to Acting Deputy Minister of the Interior**

**Note du directeur, Secteur des Territoires du Nord-Ouest et du Yukon, au sous-ministre de l'Intérieur par intérim**

Ottawa, 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1930.

Memorandum

R.A. Gibson, Esq.,  
Acting Deputy Minister.

Condition No. (i) which the Norwegian Prime Minister now wishes incorporated in the proposed agreement between the Canadian government and Commander Otto Sverdrup is entirely new. Mr. Bordewick did not raise it when here, nor was it mentioned in any subsequent correspondence. The understanding clearly was that, if the Canadian government paid Commander Sverdrup \$67,000.00 in compensation for his services in the Canadian Arctic in the years 1898-1902, he would turn over to the Canadian government all notes, documents, maps and reports relative to his explorations and would, in addition, secure from the Norwegian government a recognition of Canada's claim to the Sverdrup islands.

The fishing rights in the waters surrounding these islands are of no value in a commercial sense as no ship can come into these waters or anywhere near them on account of impossible ice conditions which prevail throughout the entire year. It would, therefore, seem to be something of a ridiculous proceeding to incorporate any agreement with reference to fishing privileges.

The matter of giving the Norwegians the right to land on the islands would be a very distinct privilege. It would convey a right which conceivably might some day be of very considerable importance. It undoubtedly would be interpreted to mean the right to land on the islands with aeroplanes. The Sverdrup islands are part of a huge game preserve and to permit the Norwegians to land on the islands as a matter of right would unquestionably be prolific of misunderstandings and disputes in the future. Perhaps the best evidence of the undesirability of granting special privileges to the Norwegians in any settlement that may be effected is found in the case cited by the Norwegian Prime Minister

himself, that of the right claimed by the Norwegians to fish and hunt along the east coast of Greenland. The net result of this privilege claimed by the Norwegians is the strange relationship of the Norwegian and Danish authorities over that very matter. I am very strongly of the opinion, therefore, that the Norwegian government's recognition of Canada's claim to the Sverdrup islands should be unconditional.

With regard to Condition No. (ii) it was decided, you will remember, that if exception was taken by the Norwegian government to a reference to these islands as being in the Canadian sector, we would not press that viewpoint. I would say, therefore, with respect to this condition that, as it seemingly is objectionable to the Norwegian government to recognize the sector as being Canadian, that contention might be dropped.

O.S. Finnie

**571.**

**Letter from Commissioner, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, to  
Minister of Justice**

**Lettre du commissaire, Royale gendarmerie à cheval du Canada, au  
ministre de la Justice**

Ottawa, June 22nd 1944.

Dear Mr St Laurent,

1. The question of sovereignty over islands lying north of the Canadian mainland has been a matter of concern to the North West Territories Council, in view of plans for post-war aviation. Apparently, jurisdiction in the form of occupation is the only sure method of claim to some of these islands. However, as the re-establishment of Police Posts on Ellesmere Island and Devon Island is not possible during hostilities, it is proposed, subject to your approval, that the Police Schooner "St Roch" – Master, Staff Sergeant Larsen – with a total crew of about eleven, suitably outfitted for wintering in the Arctic, sail from Halifax about the first week in July, calling at Pangnirtung, Baffin Island; calling and leaving records at:–

Craig Harbour, Ellesmere Island,  
Dundas Harbour, Devon Island,



and passing through Lancaster Sound, will endeavour to reach Winter Harbour, on Melville Island; calling and leaving records at:—

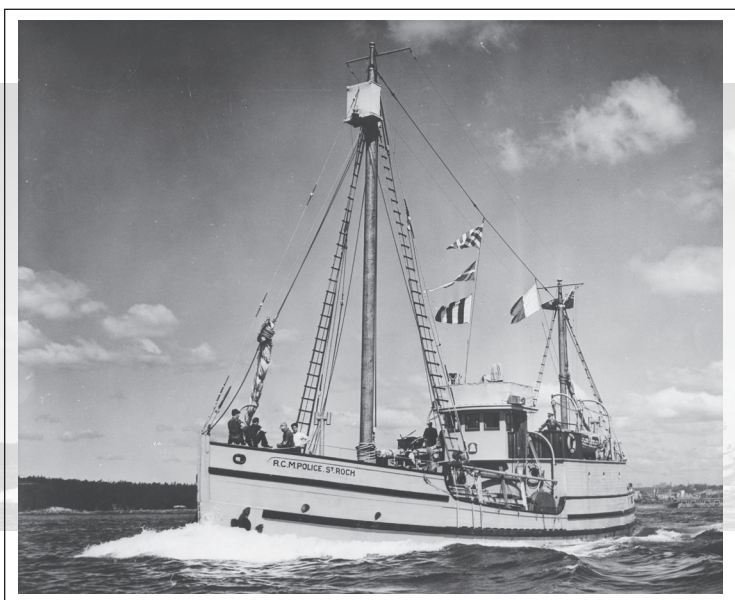
Cornwallis and Bathurst Islands.

2. I attach a map† showing the proposed route in blue of the Schooner "St Roch." It also shows the route taken by this vessel when making the North West Passage from West to East in 1941-43 [1940-1942] in red.
3. If necessary, the "St Roch" will winter at Winter Harbour, and dog sled patrols will visit, during the coming winter, all islands within a radius of 200 miles. If ice conditions are favourable, however, the "St Roch" will endeavour to come through Prince of Wales Strait to Bering Sea and report at Herschel Island for further instructions.
4. The proposed sea route, involving the North West Passage, is the natural one, if successful.
5. Whether the "St Roch" is forced to winter at Melville Island or in the vicinity of Banks Island, the winter patrols and visits to natives in those areas will be beneficial.
6. The "St Roch" is equipped with wireless, has just been re-engined, which gives her more power, and is, therefore, in better condition than ever before to make such a voyage. Among the crew are several experienced members who have served long years in the Arctic, and are, therefore, able to take care of themselves under all conditions.
7. With your approval, I would like to leave for Halifax on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July to inspect the vessel and crew before they sail; and whilst in the East, carry out an inspection of the Eastern Divisions of the Force in the Maritimes and Quebec.

Yours faithfully,  
S.T. Wood  
Commissioner.

The Honourable Louis S. St Laurent, K.C., M.P.,  
Minister of Justice,  
Ottawa, Ontario.

Approved. Louis St. Laurent



St. Roch leaving Halifax on its second Northwest Passage voyage, 1944

Le St Roch quittant Halifax pour son deuxième voyage dans le passage du Nord-Ouest, 1944

Library and Archives Canada/ Bibliothèque et Archives Canada, PA-197591



