

# ARCTIC 360



**ARCTIC SOVEREIGNTY & SECURITY SUMMIT**

OCTOBER 3 - 4, 2022

IQALUIT, NU

**SHADIAN OPENING REMARKS: BUILDING MULTI-PURPOSE, MULTI-  
USER STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE CANADIAN NORTH**

Jessica Shadian, Ph.D.



**Mission:** Canada's premier Arctic think tank. We are non-partisan and a registered not-for-profit. By working with Indigenous corporations and Northern governments, the federal government, private sector, expert Arctic leaders, partners, and our like-minded neighbours, think tanks, organizations, and institutions around the circumpolar region and beyond, our mission is to elevate the national conversation about Canada's North and the Arctic region at home and to provide an inclusive and coordinated platform for Canada to engage in Arctic discussions around the world.

**National Office**  
66 Hambly Ave.,  
Toronto, Ontario  
M4E 2R6

**Northern Branch**  
736 Igluik Drive  
PO Box 2323,  
Iqaluit, Nunavut X0A 0H0

[www.arctic360.org](http://www.arctic360.org)



**PREFACE:** On 3 October 2022, Senator Dennis Patterson, Pan Arctic Inuit Logistics (PAIL) Corporation, Nunasi Corporation and Nasittuq Corporation co-hosted a one day 'Arctic Sovereignty & Security Summit' about the need to build multi-purpose, multi-user strategic infrastructure in Canada's North.

The Summit attendees included Senators from the Standing Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans affairs as part of their information tour of the North for their upcoming Report on Arctic security.

**SHADIAN: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY** Canada needs to produce an Arctic infrastructure strategy in order to build multi-purpose, multi-user infrastructure and close the Northern infrastructure gap.

**SHADIAN PREPARED REMARKS FOR ARTIC SOVERIEGNTY & SECURITY SUMMIT:** The following remarks are built on years of learned knowledge from listening, learning, and engaging in conversations with Northerners and other Canadians and with our neighbours around the circumpolar Arctic and beyond. The over-repeated theme of basically every summit, conference, workshop, I have attended, convened through Arctic360, or participated in about Canada's north and specifically about the infrastructure gap can be summarized in one word:

*'Strategy'*

Canada needs an Arctic strategy but specifically, an Arctic infrastructure strategy. Moreover, Canada must move away from a persistent approach of patchwork announcements that are often more defensive in posture than proactive, and seemingly unattached to any known rigorous analysis including a short, medium, and long-term strategy. The focus of the following commentary relates to 4 repeated questions that remain to be properly addressed:

1. What do we have?
2. What is needed?
3. How do we determine what we need?

#### 4. Once we know what is needed how to we get there?

There is a wide range of funding buckets either deployed or planned as well as announcements of plans to prioritise the infrastructure deficit in the North. Those Announcements come from a host of departments and agencies around the federal government from Northern Affairs to NRCan and Department of Defence. Each announcement seems to hover in the air – tethered to little substance, with no larger plan or rationale, and certainly not to one another.

From a domestic position this approach obstructs the potential to build multi-purpose, multi-user infrastructure needed to close the gap. From an international perspective, funding announcements lacking the larger backdrop of a broader strategy undermines Canada's stance on the global stage. After all, Strategies do matter. It is how a nation talks to the world on a particular subject.

Many people here at home in Canada do not have an adequate sense about Canada's plan for its Arctic. So, you can only imagine what other countries are thinking and the conclusions they arrive at. At an international Arctic conference last month in Nuuk, Greenland there was a session led by a number of Arctic states but also the EU on significance of strategies: Here are some quotes from that Session:

'Strategies are important. They are a tool. They should not be a laundry list of everything. They need to be specific priorities.'

'A strategy says who we are and who we want to be. These are our values and what we stand for.'

'Strategies are meant to create the mechanisms to have an all-of-government approach for a certain issue. It tells us how to address and carry out Arctic policy.'

Bringing those quotes to this conversation and specifically the discussion about NORAD modernisation, it makes little sense to talk about infrastructure investments disconnected from other federal conversations, for example, building Canada's critical minerals economy - where the nation's first operating mine is in the Arctic in the Northwest Territories. The coming [strategy](#) not only has its own specific focus on closing the infrastructure gap, but also focuses on the relationship between Canada's critical minerals and national security as well as expected foreign direct investment.

At the same time, it is not possible to have a NORAD modernisation conversation without talking about major investments needed in broadband communications as well as ensuring that the North contains high volumes of reliable, consistent, low carbon energy supplies. And, that conversation is a conversation that cannot be independent of social and economic needs in the North.

Northerners equally require and deserve affordable and reliable telecommunications and energy not to mention roads, ports, airports, etc. This conversation sits at the heart of Indigenous reconciliation and creating sustainable, prosperous, and well functioning communities. That of course, has a direct correlation to ensuring Canada's security, Arctic sovereignty, enabling overall economic growth in Canada, and stronger collaboration with Canada's like-minded Arctic neighbours.

Furthermore, as much as a modern NORAD defense system is not going to be built by throwing a few low orbiting satellites into the air and refurbishing old diesel generators, we cannot continue to expect that we can meet the social and economic infrastructure needs in the North with investments overly focused only on solar panels and windmills or even museum replicas of bygone 20<sup>th</sup> century infrastructure.

Creating a secure Canadian Arctic is going to require major investments in state-of-the-art infrastructure from broadband to reliable energy, next generation, air, land, and maritime transportation infrastructure and an entire fleet of sensors to detect threats but could also very well monitor climate change, facilitate port logistics,

*In effect, accomplishing this feat is going to require a coordinated and strategic approach across the federal government. It is also going require building multi-purpose and multi-user infrastructure with investments that are anchored to a larger strategy and accompanying roadmap.*

**THE ROAD TO A STRATEGY** To start, we need to know what we have. We need a comprehensive inventory of existing critical infrastructure with potential multi-use purposes, its state of repair/disrepair. Yes, the government of Canada has compiled a lot of information and a host of maps that point to existing infrastructure in the North, but in many cases the information is outdated and/ or incomplete. Moreover, to date there is not a single comprehensive map of what we have in the North with the necessary accompanying data.

With that foundation, we can turn to what is needed. To begin, what is needed must be analysed in terms of short, medium, and long-term infrastructure needs. It also requires starting with the end and working to the present. A roadmap requires knowing where we are going. What is the

goal? What is the vision for Canada's Arctic today and in 20 years from now? With a vision and an identified goal, short and medium-term strategies become the steppingstones to the larger goal.

While a renewed Russian threat occupies much discussion today, investments will be both short and long-term (some investments will satisfy short-term needs, some require patient capital investments, and some immediate investments require seeing a long-term vision to attract the financing required).

Likewise, threats as well as what infrastructure investments are needed to address them are not only time dependent but also more multifaceted than in the past and therefore require across Canada coordination. For instance, is there a security risk in an investment in a runway or port to service fighter jets and maritime threats if they are in close proximity to a potential critical mineral mine? A discussion about whether Canada's critical mineral strategy should include guidelines for Foreign Direct Investment may seem like a far-off topic from today's discussion, but is it? Thinking about this a bit deeper, should Canada's coming critical mineral strategy which include discussions about foreign direct investment, national security, and closing the infrastructure gap be totally disconnected from NORAD modernization discussions that include addressing the same infrastructure gap? The same situation concerns location of Northern communities and their infrastructure needs. Again, it comes to coordinated strategy.

**PROCESS** Process is necessary for arriving at what infrastructure is needed and where the investments will go. Russia, for example, did not wake and spontaneously decide to build a port one day and an icebreaker the next. The Northern Sea Route was model that was the outcome of the government's 2015 Integrated Development Plan for the Northern Sea Route, which was adopted in 2019. The Plan set out a 15-year grand strategy for developing the Northern Sea Route. As part of that plan, the Russian government commissioned a number of reports from a detailed feasibility and development studies to business cases which were all used to help inform the overall strategy and road map.

Returning to Canada, to earnestly take advantage of the attention being paid to the North and accompanying investments, yet while also recognising the vast range of critical infrastructure that is needed in the North, and even further the colossal costs that if it is to be built, requires formulating a well-planned, long-term Arctic infrastructure strategy and road map to get there (through short and medium-term infrastructure investments).

As mentioned above, a strategy is not laundry list of needs. It must be a clear purpose driven road map of short, medium, and long-term plans. It would be built off of an existing comprehensive inventory, it would coordinate existing social, economic, and defence needs and priorities (from reliable energy, and broadband, to sensors and smart infrastructure). Likewise,

what form that infrastructure will take and where it should go would be determined by on a combination of feasibility studies that include economic climate models, risk analyses, models for public private Indigenous partnerships, as well as mechanisms to involve institutions from the Canadian Infrastructure Bank to ISED.

The analyses and models required may appear, at first, to be overwhelming. But, not doing so is precisely why we continuously find ourselves in the same situation – the constant game of playing defence driven by crisis. ‘But we need to act right away! Russia, contaminated water, China, a blackout, a sealift that can’t make it to its destination, a submarine sighting, a fuel shortage, and still the 25 dollar bananas.

**FROM CRISIS TO CRISIS** Because Canada does not have an Arctic infrastructure strategy or accompanying road map, the result is ultimately, an ad-hoc, underfunded, quickly devised, short-sighted reactive solution to a crisis that often takes the form of hastily made announcements and funding calls. In effect, Canada’s strategy up to now for the North is engaging in spontaneous reactions, as it moves from one crisis to the next. At some point, we are going to have to sit down and undergo the hard work entailed to create an earnest strategy and road map to close the infrastructure deficit in the North so that when a crisis does arise the strategy’s vision and plan can help support a thoughtful proactive response.

Ultimately, this begins with the recognition that it is not possible to continue to address Northern infrastructure policy as small pieces of the many and varied files across the federal government, not connected to one another, and not set under a broader strategy. We cannot assume that defence infrastructure will just miraculously address the social needs in the North, or automatically enable economic growth. Moreover, the Northern infrastructure needs are just too big and too fundamental to be addressed from one department or agency in the federal government.

**CONCLUSION** In thinking about the focus of the conversation today on closing the infrastructure gap to protect Canada’s Arctic sovereignty and security with the backdrop of current global politics from Ukraine to Indigenous reconciliation and the global geopolitics of the energy transition, the fact is we cannot continue down the same path. It will come at the expense of Canada domestically - its people, its economy, and its security. At the same time, I cannot imagine a better aligning of the stars type of moment for Canada to finally formulate a strategy to build the multi-user and multi-purpose infrastructure needed for the North.

**Returning to the earlier quote, ‘A strategy says who we are and who we want to be. These are our values and what we stand for’. In that vein, an Arctic infrastructure strategy (which may well be the basis of a Canadian Arctic strategy) is a way for Canada to tell the world who it is,**

**what kind of Arctic nation it plans to be, and that it takes seriously its intended leadership and role in the world as an Arctic nation.**





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