

Peace River Block Daily News

Canada will keep its Arctic presence

Friday, January 27, 2006
Page: 2
Section: Canada
Dateline: OTTAWA
Source: Canadian Press

OTTAWA (CP) -- U.S. Ambassador David Wilkins clearly struck a nerve with prime minister-designate Stephen Harper when he criticized the Conservative plan to bolster Canada's presence in the Arctic.

"I want to address one other question before I go," Harper said Thursday in response to an unasked question as a lengthy session with reporters wound down.

"I've been very clear in the campaign that we have significant plans for national defence and for defence of our sovereignty, including Arctic sovereignty. It is the Canadian people we get our mandate from, not the U.S. ambassador."

The issue of jurisdiction over the frozen archipelago and iceberg-cluttered waterways is clearly heating up in Ottawa and Washington.

An expert in Arctic defence and sovereignty predicted that the issue will become a sore point in relations between the Bush administration and the newly elected Harper government -- which had campaigned in part on a warmer rapport with Washington.

"The sovereignty of the Northwest Passage is a red button issue for Canadian political leaders and for the Canadian public," said Rob Heubert of the Centre for Military and Strategic Studies at the University of Calgary.

Harper said he'll stick to his plan to station armed icebreakers, remote-controlled aerial drones and troops in Canada's Arctic, as well as establish a deep-water submarine base in the far North.

On Wednesday, Wilkins criticized Harper's proposals, calling them unnecessary and adding that the United States "doesn't recognize Canada's claims to those waters."

He described the increasingly ice-free channels, such as the Hudson and Barrow straits, as "neutral waters."

Wilkins said most other countries don't recognize Ottawa's claim either, but ended by saying that the U.S. administration has "agreed to disagree" with Canada over the matter.

"The United States defends its sovereignty, Canada will defend its sovereignty," Harper tersely responded on Thursday.

Canada's dominion over the frozen north has been routinely challenged over the years, but it has happened with increasing frequency as global

warming has made the once ice-clogged passageways easier to traverse.

With growing interest in northern resources such as oil and gas, and Harper's determined stand, Huebert said he's worried the spat could get worse.

"We've got a dilemma and it could deteriorate," he said. "It would be against both Canadian and American interests if it were to escalate."

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The Lindsay Daily Post

Harper takes a stand with U.S.

Monday, January 30, 2006
Page: A4
Section: Opinion
Source: The Daily Post

While the government of Canada has changed - Stephen Harper completed the formalities at the end of last week - it is obvious that little will change in regards to our relationship with the United States, for the time being at least.

On Thursday the Conservative leader and prime minister-designate hit out at U.S. Ambassador David Wilkins after the envoy had stated in a speech at the University of Western of Ontario that our good neighbours to the south do not recognize our sovereignty over the Northwest Passage and other Arctic waters.

Harper had little choice but to rebuke Wilkins and the Bush administration on the issue and made sure everyone knew he was going to make a stand, making the comment at the conclusion of a press conference despite it not being raised by reporters.

Since taking the leadership of the Conservatives, there has been concern that Harper is too cozy with the United States - a kind of Canadian bogeyman when it comes to politics - and the Liberals highlighted the concern during the past two federal campaigns.

However, Harper has shown he is well aware that he cannot be seen as taking his orders from Washington and selected a safe issue in which to speak out. When it comes down to it, who can criticize any leader when they defend the nation's sovereignty? It's the rhetorical equivalent of playing tee-ball.

Still at least Harper stepped up when he didn't have to and that may win over some of his less skeptical critics.

However, questions about how he will stand up remain and we will have to see how he handles other more intricate and difficult Canada-U.S. spats such as softwood lumber and agricultural subsidies.

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Montreal Gazette

A new tone of civility: Stephen Harper's firm but polite statements in response to the U.S. ambassador's remarks on Arctic sovereignty are in marked contrast to the bluster of the Martin years

Monday, January 30, 2006

Page: A17

Section: Editorial / Op-Ed

Byline: L. IAN MACDONALD

Column: L. Ian MacDonald

Source: Freelance

Illustrations: Photo: GILBERT LEGRAS, REUTERS / Canada's claims to the Arctic were an important part of John Diefenbaker's Northern Vision. Fellow Conservative Brian Mulroney also placed an emphasis on the North.

Stephen Harper changed the play at the line of scrimmage in his first press conference as prime minister-designate last week.

First, he created home-field advantage for himself by holding the news conference in the lobby of the House of Commons, rather than sitting down in the theatre of the National Press Building. The lobby setting allowed him to recognize journalists, and provided a strong visual backdrop of the Commons through its open doors, as opposed to the staid sit-down setting of the press theatre, where questions are controlled by the press gallery. As Harper's new team demonstrated time and again during the campaign, they understand the importance of visuals.

Harper read his opening statement on the change of government entirely in French first, a gesture that did not go unnoticed by the French-language media. When he got to the end of the news conference and no one had raised the comments of U.S. ambassador David Wilkins that "we don't recognize Canada's claims" to Arctic waters, Harper decided to bring it up himself.

"We have significant plans for national defence and for defence of our sovereignty, including Arctic sovereignty," Harper said. "We believe we have the mandate for those from the Canadian people and we hope to have it as well from the House of Commons, but it is the Canadian people we get our mandate from, not the ambassador from the United States."

There. Harper was calm, his tone was measured, he didn't raise his voice. He didn't boast, as Paul Martin did during the campaign, of "standing up to the Americans."

With that simple declaration, Harper established a new tone of civility as opposed to bluster in the conduct of Canada's most important relationship. He restored the golden rule of Canada-U.S. relations: You can disagree without being disagreeable. They have their interests, we have ours. But there's also something called mutual interest, and the common good, sorely neglected by the Martin Liberals, who went so far as to put Bush in their attack ads.

Most absurdly, Martin suggested that if Harper won the election, Canada would no longer have an independent foreign policy. In effect, it would be conducted from Washington.

Wilkins's statement, blowing off our claims to Arctic sovereignty, gave Harper an opportunity to call him on it in a firm but polite manner. It also gave Harper historical continuity with two important Conservative prime ministers, John Diefenbaker and his Northern Vision and Brian Mulroney and Arctic sovereignty.

Arctic sovereignty is an emotional issue - even though most Canadians have never been there, it goes to our sense of country. In the campaign, Harper moved up his scheduled announcement on Arctic sovereignty, pledging billions for icebreakers and airborne surveillance. This was just days after a U.S. nuclear submarine popped up in Arctic waters, complete with a television crew. The message from the White House was clear - we can do this anytime we want, right in the middle of your election. It served Martin right for trashing George W. Bush.

With global warming and the melting of the polar ice cap, there are huge environmental and economic issues for the region. With open water, the Northwest Passage will become navigable. The oil beneath the ice will become available. And if Canada doesn't patrol those waters, our claims of sovereignty are empty. Which might be why we picked a fight with the Danes, over a speck of land the size of a football field, rather than the United States.

For the rest, Harper wouldn't characterize his 15-minute telephone conversation with Bush last week, except to call it "congratulatory" in nature. But chances are that Bush will invite Harper to Washington at an early opportunity. Harper is certain to have his differences with the U.S., but unlike Martin, he won't be afraid to have his picture taken with Bush.

Whenever they meet, there are now two items for the agenda, softwood and sovereignty. And if the new prime minister is making it his priority to renew relations with the United States, the Americans need to deliver something to him.

For starters, on softwood, Harper has asked for an envoy process, with personal emissaries of the president and prime minister, as was the case on acid rain 20 years ago.

As for sovereignty, the template is in a speech that

Ronald Reagan made to Parliament on April 6, 1987. In a meeting in the prime minister's office that morning, Mulroney showed Reagan the Northwest Passage on a globe in the corner by his desk. "That's ours, Ron," he said. It came up again at lunch at 24 Sussex Dr.

"Can we borrow your living room?" Reagan asked. He retired with his officials, closed the French doors, and wrote the following two sentences into his joint address:

"The prime minister and I also had a full discussion of the Arctic waters issue, and he and I agreed to inject new impetus into the discussions already underway. We are determined to find a solution based on mutual respect for sovereignty and our common security and other issues."

That's the rhetorical baseline for an understanding between Harper and Bush.

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The Expositor (Brantford)

Canada mostly talking

Monday, January 30, 2006

Page: A9

Section: Opinion

Byline: Harvey Bryant

Source: The Expositor

We must commend our new prime minister for his bold rebuttal to the new U.S. Ambassador to Canada about U.S. opinions on the Northwest Passage. U.S. Navy submarines have charted these waters some time ago and are well in a position to direct future shipping channels.

The problem is that Canada is woefully short of equipment and personnel to truly do better than show the flag. Substantial ice-breakers and perhaps a naval presence are the order. Our new frigates are too thin skinned to be considered permanent participants in those Arctic waters.

We may do the talk, but can we do the walk, now?

Harvey Bryant

Brantford

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The Ottawa Citizen

Canada's claim to Arctic waters widely ratified

Monday, January 30, 2006
Page: A11
Section: News
Page Name: Letters
Byline: Gerard Kenney
Source: The Ottawa Citizen

Re : Hands off the Arctic, Harper tells U.S., Jan. 27.

U.S. Ambassador David Wilkins is wrong when he says, "We don't recognize Canada's claims to those waters. Most other countries do not recognize their claims."

Since 1982, there has been a UN convention called the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Canada's claim of sovereignty in the Arctic rests on the fact that in 1986 it fulfilled all the requirements of UNCLOS to officially establish its claim. This includes the publication of what are called straight baselines, which enclose Canada's Arctic archipelago and tie it to the mainland. All waters within the area defined, including the Northwest Passage, are internal waters of Canada according to the UNCLOS provisions.

Of the world's 190 or so countries, some 150 have ratified UNCLOS and are bound by its provisions. Among these countries are the European Community countries, Britain, Russia, Japan, China, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland and Canada -- but not the U.S. The U.S. finds itself on the outside with a handful of other, minor, countries that for various internal reasons have not ratified UNCLOS.

It is high time the U.S. joined the great majority of the world's countries, including the major ones, in recognizing and ratifying UNCLOS, a UN convention that expresses the interests of the countries of the world as a whole, rather than the interests of any one country.

Gerard Kenney,

Ottawa

MIKE DUFFY LIVE

Interview with US Ambassador to Canada David Wilkins

Broadcast Date: Monday, January 30, 2006
Time: 17:00:00 ET
End Time: 18:00:00 ET
Network: CTV NEWSNET

JANE TABER: Good afternoon. And welcome to the Monday edition of "Mike Duffy Live". I'm Jane Taber. Mike Duffy is off this week. While the Harper transition team plugs away at shaping its new cabinet and brushes up on everything it needs to know before being sworn in next Monday, Paul Martin has also been busy. He's with us today, getting his haircut under the watchful eye of four RCMP officers. Yesterday the moving vans were at 24 Sussex Drive packing up and shipping out the personal belongings of the former Prime Minister. And the extra space will come in handy. Tomorrow night Mr. Martin is hosting an intimate soiree at 24 Sussex. His way of saying thank you to some of his campaign team members. Paul Martin's decision to step down as Liberal leader has left a hole in the party. Canadian ambassador to the United States Frank McKenna was considered the frontrunner but today he announced he will not be seeking the leadership. Later in the show we'll talk to former Ontario Premier David Peterson about why Mr. McKenna made this decision. Also ahead in the program, we'll take a look towards the release of the second Gomery report due out this Wednesday. But first, we turn south of the border to talk to a man who is under a lot of controversy and bashed a little bit I would say during the election campaign. He's the United States Ambassador to Canada, David Wilkins. Welcome, ambassador.

DAVID WILKINS (US Ambassador to Canada): Thank you, Jane. Great to be with you.

TABER: It's nice of you to join us here. I talked about that cloud of controversy that seems to be over your head, and you're a southern gentleman. I don't understand what happens when you speak in Canada. What do you make of that?

WILKINS: Well, first of all, my position as ambassador is obviously not to be a policy maker but advocate my country's position, and so I'm going to do to continue to do that to the best of my ability and hopefully I can do it in such a way that people understand it and the message gets across, and sometimes people like the message, and sometimes they don't. But I think that's my job as ambassador to advocate the position of my country, and that's my job, and I will continue to do it. Hopefully I will do it in a pleasant way, and a way that's well received, but nevertheless I'm going to continue to do it.

TABER: Last week you were just minding your own business, I guess speaking at the University of Western Ontario in London when you were asked a question about Arctic sovereignty, and you said that you didn't recognize, the Americans didn't recognize what we believe is, what Canadians believe is our waters and caused a bit of controversy with Stephen

Harper. Were you surprised by Mr. Harper's comments?

WILKINS: Well what I was doing last week is doing what I love doing and that's speaking with kids. I was at Western University for a two hour forum with other individuals, and we were taking questions from the audience, question from students, and the question was about the issue of the northwest passage, and I simply restated the position of the United States has been restated many, many times for the past two decades, that we do not recognize the claim of Canada to the northwest passage, and we did that. I didn't say any more, any less than what has been said many, many times before.

TABER: And the next day.

WILKINS: Well the next day there was a strong response. But, again, my job is to advocate my country's position. That position is well known. That was not a surprise to anyone. I have said that many, many times since I've been in Canada, my seven months here, and it's been the position of the United States for many decades. So we simply restated a position that had been well known.

TABER: And you had spoken to the Prime Minister designate Stephen Harper just after his victory, and had he mentioned anything? Had there been any discussions about this Arctic sovereignty issue in the telephone call?

WILKINS: We did not get into any substance discussion. I called Mr. Harper to wish him well and to congratulate him and tell him how much we look forward to working with him, and we do look forward to working with him. And I know the next day the President called and had a very cordial and warm conversation with him. We look forward to working with the leaders that Canada elects, and we look forward to working with Mr. Harper.

TABER: And are you expecting a different tone than what you had with the Liberal government?

WILKINS: The thing about it is Canada and the United States have a wonderful relationship. We have a relationship that is the envy of the world. And what we shouldn't do is let one issue dominate us or define our relationship, so I don't want to compare one administration or one government with the other. But we worked hard to have a good relationship with Mr. Martin and his government, and we will work hard with Mr. Harper.

TABER: It didn't seem to work. You talked during the election campaign about Mr. Martin beating,

thumping his chest, and talking about, you know, bashing the Bush administration, and that's why you spoke out during the campaign.

WILKINS: Well, again, what I said during that campaign on that one occasion was something I had said many, many times before prior to the beginning of the campaign, and again, the point was let's accentuate the positive. We have the relationship that is the envy of the world, and yet we spend most of our time talking about the one or two issues where we have a disagreement on. And I was simply saying we ought to talk about the things we do together, in partnership that affect good change throughout the world whenever Canada and the United States work together.

TABER: Okay. The Canadian ambassador to the United States, Frank McKenna, in his press conference today when he said he wasn't going to seek the Liberal leadership, talked about the tone, and talked about the relationship between Canada and the United States, and he said that the tone at the top, he was kind of critical about the tone at the top, but said everything else seemed to be working. Would you agree with him?

WILKINS: Well I would tell you this, I have great respect for Frank McKenna, and I think he has been an outstanding ambassador for Canada in my country. We are friends. We communicate frequently. And we talk about the tone. Talk about setting an example for a more positive tone between our two countries. And I would tell you, I have nothing but great respect for him.

TABER: Now he's stepping down and you're going to have to establish a new relationship with the next ambassador. I want to talk about something that happened as well during the campaign, and this was the Liberal party that took the personal attack on the Bush administration building on the anti-American sentiments. And they went as far as creating an ad that suggested a Conservative government would bring closer ties with the United States, and we wanted to know if President Bush saw the ad and what he thought of it. But first, I want you to take a look at the ad.

LIBERAL AD: From the Washington Times, December 2nd, 2005. Canada may elect the most pro-American leader in the western world. Harper is pro-Iraq war, anti-Kyoto and socially Conservative. Bush's new best friend is the poster boy for his ideal foreign leader. A Harper victory will put a smile on George W. Bush's face. Well, at least someone will be happy, eh? Choose your Canada.

TABER: You're smiling. You were smiling during that ad. Did the President see it, and what did you think of it?

WILKINS: Well I don't know whether he saw it or not. But, again, as I said earlier, the United States was not on the ballot during the Canadian election, and the Canadian people, enthusiastically supported their candidates and almost close to 70 percent voted and elected a new Prime Minister and so ads are in

the past. We look forward to the future, and we look forward to working very closely with this new government, and working to strengthen an already strong relationship and make it even better.

TABER: When will the Prime Minister designate, he's going to of course, Mr. Harper will become the Prime Minister next Monday. When is he expected to meet with President Bush?

WILKINS: Well that's something that I'm sure Mr. Harper and Mr. Bush will decide and will do some time in the future. I don't know when. But, again, I'm sure they will have that meeting some time in the future, and we look forward to not only the meeting between the two leaders, but also as the government gets formed, continued meeting and talking among the cabinet officials, and I plan on trying to get as many folks from Washington up here to visit and vice versa, and we want to continue to have a strong relationship.

TABER: Would he be a candidate for the ranch. We always used to make a lot about the fact that Mr. Martin had never been to the ranch. He eventually got there.

WILKINS: Well I'm not the person to ask about that. But I do know that the President called and congratulated him, and looks forward to a strong working relationship with the person that the Canadian people decided they wanted to be their Prime Minister.

TABER: Okay. We can't do an interview without talking about softwood lumber. That file is one of the huge irritants between the two countries, a thing that you don't like to emphasize, but where are we at and what's happening on that?

WILKINS: Well late in the year I think some strong steps were made. Canada kept saying show some good faith. The US Department of Commerce and asked in late November to cut the tariffs in half. They also recalculated the tariffs. And if you go through the NAFTA process, that will, if there is no appeal from that, that will lead to the elimination of tariffs after the process gets through, so I think we're making progress. What we need now is to sit down and talk and begin the dialogue so we can bring finality to that issue once and for all. If not, new lawsuits will be brought again.

TABER: Predictions to the finality to that lawsuit simply because we are expecting a new ambassador who's going to have be briefed on the whole issue.

WILKINS: Well, you know, I'm optimistic. I mean I know that that is an issue that many of us, I certainly want to see that resolved this year, and I know that many of us do, and we're going to work very hard to do that.

TABER: You think it can be resolved this year?

WILKINS: I think we can all work very hard to bring a final negotiated settlement to that issue in 2006, and I'm going to do all I can to help make that happen.

TABER: Okay. You're a southerner, and you're experiencing now a Canadian winter, a mild one at that actually, so you're lucky this year. What, tell us about what you've been doing to get yourself through this winter. You're a tennis player I understand, not a hockey player.

WILKINS: Well I've been to the hockey games. I'm a big hockey fan now.

TABER: You won't say which team you support.

WILKINS: I support all Canadian teams.

TABER: Ever the diplomat.

WILKINS: But I've been skating on the Rideau Canal. Second day it was open I was out there. It wasn't a pretty sight but I did it, and I, the toboggan run in Quebec, we were there for the opening of the carnival, Susan and I this past weekend, and I did that a couple of times. That wasn't a pretty sight either but it was fun. I did it.

TABER: So you expect to be doing some more winter activities in the next little while?

WILKINS: Canadians tell me to embrace the winter, not the TV, so we're out and about and we're embracing the winter. And I admire the way Canadians do that. The cold weather, the snow doesn't slow them down a bit, and I'm trying to emulate them and do the same thing.

TABER: Okay. Thank you very much Ambassador Wilkins. I hope with this next government that you'll always just have happy times and not attract so much controversy. Of course we like that though.

WILKINS: Well, again, my job is to advocate my country's position, and I will tell you it's a privilege of a lifetime to be in your country.

TABER: And you do that very strongly. Thank you very much.

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The Globe And Mail

Captain Canada

Monday, January 30, 2006
Page: A12
Section: Letter To The Editor
Byline: Morris Maduro
Dateline: Edmonton
Illustrations: Illustration

Edmonton -- Prime minister-designate Stephen Harper and your editorial (Harper Speaks Up For Canada's Arctic -- Jan. 28) make the assumption that Canada's sovereignty over the Northwest Passage is solely a matter of militarily defending that passage from the entry of foreign vessels. They are both wrong. International law, based on centuries of practice, custom, international court decisions and treaty (including the extant Law of the Sea treaty to which Canada is a signatory), establish that straits that are used for international navigation between two parts of the high seas must allow freedom of navigation to vessels of all states, a right known as "transit passage."

The United States has consistently taken this position, and, this view is backed by the world community, including states bordering over 100 international straits that currently fall under this regime. Given the critical need by the U.S. and major maritime states for a route that shaves half the travel time and distance between the U.S. east and west coasts and between Europe and Asia, Canada and our leaders had better wake up to the world's legal, political, economic, and military realities.

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CBC.CA News

Wilkins says Arctic comment old news

Section: Canada
Broadcast Date: Sunday, January 29, 2006
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Network: CBC

The U.S. ambassador to Canada is downplaying his comments on the status of Arctic waters that made him the target of criticism by prime minister-designate Stephen Harper.

David Wilkins said on Friday that his statement earlier in the week, that the U.S. and other countries don't recognize Canada's claim to Arctic waters, was not news.

"I simply restated the longstanding and well-known position of the United States on the legal status of the Arctic waters," he said.

He has repeated that many times in Canada, Wilkins told a Quebec City audience.

The Conservatives promised during the recent general election campaign to beef up Canadian forces in the Arctic.

Talking to students at the University of Western Ontario on Wednesday, Wilkins apparently took issue with that plan. "There's no reason to create a problem that doesn't exist," he said.

On Friday, he insisted that decisions about Canada's military are an "internal decision for the Canadian government."

Harper's criticism of Wilkins came Thursday during his first news conference since winning a minority government.

"It is the Canadian people we get our mandate from, not the ambassador of the United States," Harper said, raising the topic on his own.

Wilkins said Friday that the disagreement over the Arctic water would not harm U.S.-Canada relations.

Washington views the Northwest Passage, the mostly frozen water between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans across the far north of Canada, as an international strait. Canada has claimed the passage as territorial waters, where Canadian law would apply.

No country has made any claim on Canada's northern lands, except for Denmark, which disputes Canadian ownership of tiny Hans Island.

Wilkins also said he hoped the softwood lumber dispute could be resolved this year.

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The Miami Herald

CANADA: U.S. ambassador plays down new leader's harsh remarks

Sunday, January 29, 2006
Page: 29
Section: A

(AFP) -- U.S. ambassador to Canada David Wilkins on Friday downplayed harsh remarks by prime minister-elect Stephen Harper blasting Washington's denial of Canada's Arctic sovereignty.

Wilkins on Wednesday said that sending more Canadian soldiers, icebreakers and military aircraft to the barren north was unnecessary and could create problems between Ottawa and Washington, at odds over the famed Northwest Passage and the resource-rich Beaufort Sea.

"We don't recognize Canada's claims to those waters. Most other countries do not recognize their claim. We have agreed to disagree," Wilkins said.

The next day, Harper, in the first public address, chided Wilkins. "We believe we have a mandate from the Canadian people and we hope to have it from the House of Commons, but it is the Canadian people we get our mandate from, not the ambassador of the United States," he said.

The U.S. ambassador told reporters on Friday that he "simply restated the long standing and well-known position of the United States on the legal status of the Arctic waters."

It is "the same statement that I have made many, many times while I've been in Canada over the last seven months," Wilkins said.

U.S. officials "look forward to working with Mr. Harper and his new cabinet," Wilkins said.

Canada's northern territorial claims became an election issue following reports that a US submarine traveled unannounced through Canadian Arctic waters in December.

The Province

Harper is right to defend Canada's claim in the Arctic

Sunday, January 29, 2006

Page: A20

Section: Editorial

Source: The Province

Illustrations: Colour Photo: The Northwest Passage could become a major sea lane between Europe and Asia

Between 1940 and 1942, the RCMP schooner St. Roch became the first vessel in history to navigate the Northwest Passage in both directions, thereby establishing Canada's claim to sovereignty over the frigid Arctic waters.

Although Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen had navigated a one-way passage in the Gjoa as early as 1903, the voyage of the St. Roch remains the most significant maritime event in Canadian history.

More than 60 years later, however, successive Canadian governments have done precious little to bolster that claim.

And last week, the U.S. ambassador to Canada, David Wilkins, bluntly told an audience in London, Ont., that the U.S. "does not recognize Canada's claims to the waters" which it regards as "neutral."

Prime minister-designate Stephen Harper quickly responded, assuring reporters that Canadians would set the mandate for his government, "not the ambassador from the United States."

He was accused of grandstanding in an attempt to show that he is not about to bow and scrape to the dictates of the Bush administration.

But there is every reason to believe the Tory leader was speaking from a point of principle. And his early intervention in this debate is not only welcome, but timely.

Arctic sovereignty is comprehensively dealt with in the Conservative election manifesto.

Harper has promised three polar icebreakers, a deepwater port near Iqaluit, underwater sensors and a new Arctic-trained airborne battalion.

It is the most determined approach to this contentious issue since the travel-weary St. Roch found a permanent resting place at the Vancouver Maritime Museum in 1958.

UBC Professor Michael Byers, who is conducting a research project on the Northwest Passage, has identified issues that make our claim to sovereignty far more important than merely satisfying some nationalist dream.

The Northwest Passage could become a major sea lane between Europe and Asia, chopping some 7,000 kilometres off the Panama Canal route.

Who will patrol this route in order to protect against environmental degradation, if not

Canada? Who will guard the border against terrorist incursions, if not Canada?

And who knows what other opportunities await in the resource-rich Arctic as the century unfolds?

Byers has put it clearly enough: "With sovereignty, you either lose it or use it."

Montreal Gazette

U.S. envoy plays down Arctic remark: I simply restated U.S. stand: Wilkins. Ambassador had called Northwest Passage, which Canada claims, 'neutral waters'

Saturday, January 28, 2006
Page: A12
Section: News
Byline: KEVIN DOUGHERTY
Dateline: QUEBEC
Source: The Gazette

United States Ambassador David Wilkins has downplayed his criticism of the Harper government's plans to send armed icebreakers to the Arctic.

"There are decisions regarding the Canadian military that are internal," he told reporters yesterday when asked about his earlier remarks.

On Wednesday, Wilkins had questioned Harper's commitment to invest \$5.3 billion to build three armed icebreakers, make Iqaluit a deep-water port, and install electronic listening posts in Arctic waters.

This led to a stinging rebuke from Prime Minister-designate Stephen Harper at the end of a Thursday press conference.

Harper brought up Wilkins's statement himself at the end of the news conference, saying that his mandate was from the Canadian people, "not the ambassador from the United States."

But yesterday, Wilkins stressed his remarks Wednesday were simply a restatement of the long-standing and well-known position of the United States rejecting Canada's sovereignty claims over the Northwest Passage.

Speaking at a panel discussion on Canada-U.S. relations at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ont., Wilkins had told a student who asked about the armed-icebreaker plan that the United States does not recognize Canadian sovereignty over Arctic waters, referring to the area as "neutral waters."

"There's no reason to create a problem that doesn't exist," Wilkins said, questioning why there needs to be a military buildup in the area.

Yesterday, peppered with media questions after a luncheon address to a Quebec City economic-development organization, Wilkins refused to be drawn further on the matter.

"I'm not going to go down that path with you," he told a reporter who pressed him on the issue.

The ambassador pleaded with reporters to ask him questions on other issues.

"I look forward to working with Mr. Harper on a range of policy issues in our relationship," he said. "And I know our president does."

"I can't say anything clearer than what I said," he added. "I just stated our position and I can't go any farther."

Asked about the long-standing softwood-lumber dispute with the United States, Wilkins said he hopes it will be resolved this year. He pointed out the United States has accepted a NAFTA panel ruling in Canada's favour and has reduced the penalties it slaps on lumber imported from Canada to artificially boost the price.

"I think those are two very strong good-faith gestures by the United States on that issue," Wilkins said. "Canadians have said they want some sign of good faith."

He added the election of a new Canadian government has stalled the resolution process.

"After they are organized, I hope the dialogue can begin again in earnest and this issue can be resolved."

The ambassador also clarified U.S. plans to require Canadians entering the United States and Americans re-entering their own country from Canada to have passports, starting in 2008.

He said U.S. officials are looking into the possibility that a secure document, equivalent to a passport, could also be used.

The alternate document "would be easier to carry, would be smaller and also be more easily accessible and less expensive."

Canada could adopt its own secure document, Wilkins added. "But the law stays in place."

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The Toronto Star

Harper's Arctic stand makes for grand politics; But U.S. has better legal argument

Saturday, January 28, 2006
Page: F2
Section: National Report
Byline: Thomas Walkom

Surprise. It seems that Stephen Harper will save us from the Americans. At least that's what the prime minister-designate volunteered to reporters this week when, at the end of his first formal news conference since winning Monday's election, he answered a question no one had asked.

The unasked question had to do with something David Wilkins, Washington's ambassador to Canada, said on Wednesday. Apparently Wilkins told an audience at London's University of Western Ontario that Harper's plans to militarize the Northwest Passage running through Canada's Arctic were ill advised since, in Washington's view, these are international waters.

The adroit ambassador can always be counted on to say something that lets Canadian prime ministers stand up and pound their nationalist breasts. In December, he gave Liberal Leader Paul Martin a boost in the polls by attacking him for criticizing George W. Bush. This week, it was Harper's turn to get a helping hand.

"The United States defends its sovereignty; the Canadian government will defend our sovereignty," the Conservative leader warned sternly on Thursday. "It is the Canadian people that we get our mandate from, not the ambassador of the United States."

Huzzah. Take that, George W.

In fact, most media hadn't paid attention to Wilkins' remarks, largely because they weren't news. The United States, as well as Japan and the European Union, insist that the ice-choked passage, which winds through the archipelago of the Canadian Arctic to link the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, is an international waterway.

Theoretically, Canada disagrees. But since 1945, it has signed a host of secret treaties that give American warships and submarines unimpeded access to these and other Canadian waters.

In 1988, Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney and U.S. president Ronald Reagan signed a pact whereby Washington agreed to tell Ottawa before sending non-military ships through the Northwest Passage.

In return, Ottawa agreed to never say no.

Now, Harper has promised to build three icebreakers and station them at a brand-new, year-round naval base in Iqaluit on Baffin Island.

He's also promised to set up a system of underwater listening posts to detect foreign submarines and warships travelling through the Canadian Arctic.

Neither of these is a foolish idea. If Canada is to bother with a navy, it makes sense to have one that can patrol all of the country's coastal waters.

But exactly how these moves would protect Canadian sovereignty against the likes of David Wilkins is less clear.

Is Harper prepared to tear up the treaties that already give the U.S. effective carte blanche in the Arctic? Would his three icebreakers attempt to ram the American fleet if it decided to steam through the Northwest Passage?

If his underwater sensors detect a U.S. submarine skulking along the coast of Ellesmere Island, would he have the Canadian Forces drop depth charges?

Certainly, the Arctic issue is serious. The polar icecap is melting, making it easier to navigate the Northwest Passage. Scientists warn that if this route were to become a well-travelled waterway for, say, oil tankers, there could be unwelcome consequences for the fragile ecology of the Canadian North.

Unfortunately, for Canada, the U.S. has the better legal argument here. Other key maritime routes that pass through sovereign territory, such as Indonesia's Strait of Sunda, are treated as international waterways. Why not the Northwest Passage?

Perhaps even more important, though, are the simmering issues of resource ownership in the Arctic, as Canada, Denmark, Russia and the U.S. vie with one another for the right to exploit undersea oil and gas deposits.

The hottest of these is a boundary dispute in the oil-rich Beaufort Sea of the Western Arctic that pits Canada against the U.S. Is Harper willing to go to the mat with George W. Bush over the Beaufort? Could he do so, even if he wished?

Still, it's all grand politics. Canadians - even those who have never travelled north of Bloor St. - maintain a sentimental attachment to the Arctic. Nothing gets the blood stirring more than the idea of nefarious Yankees trampling all over this particular national icon.

If Harper's lucky, Canadians will be so puffed with pride at his attack on the hapless Wilkins that they

won't notice when he continues Martin's policy of hewing to the Bush line in other, arguably more important, foreign policy areas - such as Afghanistan, where Ottawa is sending troops to take up the slack left by departing American soldiers.

O Canada. The true North strong and free. We stand on guard for thee.

It always works.

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Times Colonist (Victoria)

Save the rhetoric for a real dispute: Arctic matters to both Canada and the U.S., so it is important to work with each other

Saturday, January 28, 2006
Page: A14
Section: Comment
Source: Times Colonist

Stephen Harper has been quick -- too quick -- to put on the Captain Canada uniform once worn by Paul Martin. He found it necessary on Thursday to tell the U.S. ambassador to butt out of our affairs.

to assert our sovereignty and deal with things like pollution threats: We don't need a prime minister dancing about the schoolyard looking for a bully to bait.

"It's the Canadian people we get our mandate from, not the ambassador of the United States," he told reporters before they had time to ask a question.

The fight the prime minister-designate picked, where none exists, is in the Arctic. Other prime ministers have felt it necessary from time to time to declare Canadian sovereignty over the rocks and ice up there, but usually they wait for some provocation, such as foreign ships or submarines passing through or under the Northwest Passage without Ottawa's permission.

What got Harper all riled up this time was the innocuous observation by U.S. Ambassador David Wilkins that the U.S. and most other countries "don't recognize Canada's claims to those waters."

This was no "Vive l'Arctique libre!" cry from some City Hall balcony north of 60. Wilkins wasn't on any platform, but taking part in a forum at the University of Western Ontario. He'd been asked about the issue and Harper's election campaign platform to spend \$5.3 billion over five years for things like armed heavy icebreakers to defend northern waters.

After stating the differences of opinion that have been known for decades, the ambassador carefully added that "there's no reason to create a problem that doesn't exist," and that Canada and the U.S. have agreed to disagree on the issue.

He did add in a CBC interview later, though, that he didn't think that the kind of military buildup Harper is talking about is necessary.

Perhaps Harper wanted not to appear weaker than Martin, who declared he wouldn't be "dictated to" and that Canada must speak "with an independent voice." That was in response to Wilkins' caution about chest-thumping and criticizing the U.S. during the election campaign, and it was, itself, an obvious election-motivated gesture.

Well, the election is over and Harper doesn't need to pick fights to win votes. Canada will need friends, especially if, as Harper pledges, it will extend unilaterally its 200-mile limit off the East Coast to deal with foreign vessels that are overfishing.

Harper has an opportunity to discuss Arctic security calmly with the terrorist-transfixed U.S. and to mend some broken fences. We do need an Arctic presence

The Standard (St. Catharines)

Envoy tries to mend fences over comments

Saturday, January 28, 2006
Page: A8
Section: National
Dateline: QUEBEC CITY
Source: The Canadian Press

QUEBEC CITY - U.S. ambassador David Wilkins is trying to calm a minor tempest he stirred up earlier this week when he said America considers the Northwest Passage to be neutral waters.

Wilkins said he was asked about a Conservative plan to bolster Canada's military presence in the North and he just repeated a policy that's been in place for years.

He said it's not a new position at all.

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Edmonton Journal

Getting warm on the Arctic

Saturday, January 28, 2006
Page: A18
Section: Opinion
Source: The Edmonton Journal

Prime Minister-elect Stephen Harper took a small step toward an extended stay in office this week with his firm message to the United States about his intention to defend Canada's claim to sovereignty in the Arctic.

defence and for the defence of our sovereignty."

For those who doubted it -- for those who imagined a return of Conservatives to 24 Sussex might mean a resurrection of the Brian Mulroney "When Irish eyes are smiling" approach to Washington -- it turns out Harper has no problem turning that thin forbidding smile of his on Republican Washington when he thinks its in our interests.

Now what he needs to do is distance himself from the old, chronic Liberal tendency of not backing up rhetoric with action, and invest in the icebreakers and manpower that will give meaning to our right to treat the Northwest Passage running through our Arctic islands as a Canadian jurisdiction.

No doubt, skeptics would be right to accuse Harper of domestic political calculation in taking an unprompted shot at U.S. Ambassador David Wilkins, who had just reminded an academic gathering in Ontario that the U.S. rejects Canada's claim.

Cynics would be equally justified in suggesting that if Paul Martin had said such a thing during the recent campaign, Conservatives would have accused him of gratuitous anti-Americanism.

But the fact is, politely "agreeing to disagree" with the Americans, as Wilkins would prefer, is to accept the U.S.'s status quo in Arctic waters that Harper rightly said in his campaign isn't good enough.

Indeed, if he were tactless, Harper might write a note to Wilkins explaining he is merely taking a page out of the George W. Bush playbook.

After all, the U.S. president has famously been unwilling to "agree to disagree" with partners in the international community, if doing so got in the way of doing what he felt was right.

Perhaps, the issue of sovereignty over increasingly ice-free Arctic waters will be resolved by Canada's willingness to build in measures that contribute to continental and U.S. security. That would be fine.

But however it ends, Wilkins might be wise to cable Washington that Harper is on to an issue that could rally a wider cross-section of Canadian voters to his cause.

And as a result, unlike Martin's Liberals, he might actually deliver on "significant plans for national

The Globe And Mail

Harper rebukes U.S. envoy over Arctic dispute Ambassador reminded panel that U.S. doesn't recognize Canada's sovereignty

Friday, January 27, 2006
Page: A4
Section: National News
Byline: Gloria Galloway
Dateline: OTTAWA
Source: With a report from Karen Howlett
Illustrations: Illustration

OTTAWA -- Stephen Harper rebuked U.S. Ambassador David Wilkins for his country's failure to recognize Canada's Arctic sovereignty -- an admonition that seems designed to refute assertions he will be too cozy with the U.S. administration.

Mr. Harper's censure came in his first press conference since the Conservative election victory and after he visited Governor-General Michaëlle Jean to accept her offer to form the next government. Feb. 6 was set for the swearing-in of his cabinet.

"We have significant plans for national defence and for defence of our sovereignty, including Arctic sovereignty," the prime-minister-designate told reporters in the lobby of the House of Commons after the time allotted for questions had expired.

"We believe we have the mandate for those from the Canadian people and we hope to have it as well from the House of Commons, but it is the Canadian people we get our mandate from, not the ambassador from the United States."

Mr. Wilkins had reminded a panel discussion at the University of Western Ontario in London on Wednesday that the United States does not recognize Canadian sovereignty over the Northwest Passage.

"Our position is very consistent. We agree to disagree. We don't recognize Canada's claims to the waters," Mr. Wilkins said of Mr. Harper's plan to put icebreakers and military personnel in what the United States believes to be an international waterway.

However, U.S. officials have also said the disagreement is not of a magnitude that required immediate resolution.

Mr. Harper addressed the issue even though the ambassador's words were not widely reported, and no reporters asked about them yesterday. Public opinion polls suggest many Canadians distrust the administration of President George W. Bush, and it is in the best political interest of any Canadian leader to demonstrate a willingness to stand firm in matters where the two countries disagree.

When Liberal Leader Paul Martin took the United States to task during the election campaign over its response to the softwood lumber dispute and climate change, Mr. Harper accused him of engaging "in a series of phony and reckless wars of words with the United States that does not help this economy or Canadians."

But he also made it clear throughout the campaign that, though his relationship with the United States would be more cordial than that of Mr. Martin, he would respond to issues as they arise in the best interests of Canada.

Mr. Harper said he has spent much of his time since Monday's election addressing issues related to the change of government and speaking with Canadian premiers and foreign heads of state, including Mexican President Vicente Fox, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Australian Prime Minister John Howard and Mr. Bush.

"The conversation was really congratulatory in nature," Mr. Harper said of his talk with the U.S. President on Wednesday. "We agreed that we would meet at a timetable yet to be determined to discuss a number of important issues."

Mr. Harper also met with the Clerk of the Privy Council and the Governor of the Bank of Canada, and said he plans future meetings with the Chief of Defence Staff and the Commissioner of the RCMP.

He will also have to determine who among his caucus members belongs in his new cabinet.

"I have to make a number of difficult decisions and I know it's inevitable that a significant number of people will be disappointed with the decisions that I make," he said. "But I will make the decisions in what I think are the best interests of the country and more particularly in what I think are the best interests of having a smoothly operating machinery of government."

He also acknowledged the difficulty his party may have in passing legislation in a minority Parliament. But the fact that his priority is a federal accountability act to clean up government abuse will make it easier to find early agreement, he said.

"Since every party ran on platforms that included accountability measures," he said, "I am confident that we will find broad consensus to move forward on these changes."

Although the Conservatives have their own plan for improved accountability, Mr. Harper said if Mr. Justice John Gomery's second report on the sponsorship scandal recommends measures "that are consistent with our principles and our objectives,

we'll try to adopt them."

When the Liberal minority government introduced its first Throne Speech in 2004, Mr. Harper lamented the lack of input from the other parties. Asked when he will invite the opposition to help write his government's Throne Speech, he replied that he does intend to consult with the opposition leaders.

"I will be open to hearing as much input as they want to give," Mr. Harper said. "It will be ultimately my decision and the decision of our cabinet how much we accept."

On the contentious issue of same-sex marriage, he reiterated his desire to ask Parliament "sooner rather than later, but not immediately" whether it wishes to reopen the matter with the intention of restoring the traditional definition of marriage.

As to other issues arising during the campaign, Mr. Harper also noted Chinese New Year begins on Sunday and said the Chinese community deserves an apology for the head tax levied on immigrants from that country until 1923 and appropriate acknowledgment and redress.

And he said he is not in favour of paying severance to former Liberal cabinet minister David Dingwall, who resigned last year as head of the Royal Canadian Mint, because Mr. Dingwall left voluntarily.

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CTV NEWS

Stephen Harper gets right down to business

Broadcast Date: Thursday, January 26, 2006
Time: 23:00:00 ET
End Time: 23:30:00 ET
Network: CTV

LLOYD ROBERTSON: Good evening, Stephen Harper will be sworn in as Prime Minister of Canada on Monday, February the sixth. But he's already getting down to business. Today in his first news conference since Monday's election win, Harper chose a lectern in the halls of parliament with a back drop of the House of Commons. He outlined his minority Conservative government plans and was careful to be calm and conciliatory, saying he expected to have many conversations with opposition parties. At the same time he wasn't shy about putting forward his own agenda, which included an unexpected difference with the Americans. CTV's Ottawa bureau chief Robert Fife reports.

ROBERT FIFE (Reporter): Stephen Harper went to Rideau Hall to see Governor-General Michaëlle Jean and prepare the handover of power. The meeting lasted 15 minutes, but it didn't take too long for the Prime Minister designate to sound as if he's already in charge.

STEPHEN HARPER (Canadian Prime Minister Designate): The United States defends its sovereignty. Canadian government will defend our sovereignty.

FIFE: The issue, Arctic sovereignty. US ambassador David Wilkins sparked the first row when he slammed Harper's plans to deploy military ice breakers in the Northwest Passage. And while the Conservative leader wants to warm up icy relations with the United States, he says Canada won't be an easy pushover.

HARPER: It is the Canadian people we get our mandate from not the ambassador of the United States.

FIFE: Harper has been busy taking calls from foreign leaders, including Britain's Tony Blair, and shaping a new smaller cabinet. But it means leaving many cabinet hopefuls on the back benches.

HARPER: It's inevitable that a significant number of people will be disappointed.

FIFE: Harper says he's confident the minority Parliament will pass the Tory ethics package, tax cuts and their child care plan.

HARPER: Our first priority will be to clean up government, make it more open and more accountable to tax payers.

FIFE: As for a free vote on a return to the traditional definition of marriage...

HARPER: I would prefer to do it sooner rather than later, but not immediately.

FIFE: Tonight, US officials said Wilkins did not mean to offend Harper, a fellow Conservative whom the Bush administration wants to get along with. The relationship with George Bush is a top priority for Harper. He wants to tone down the anti-American rhetoric and get on a good business footing with the President. But he's also a politician, and he knows standing up to Washington has never hurt a Canadian leader. Lloyd?

ROBERTSON: Thank you Bob. CTV's Ottawa bureau chief Robert Fife.

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CTV NEWS

Harper distances himself from the Americans

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LLOYD ROBERTSON: And also in Ottawa, our chief political correspondent Craig Oliver. Craig, was this in the nature of a gift from the Americans to Stephen Harper today?

CRAIG OLIVER (Reporter): Oh, yeah, Harper should send the American ambassador a bouquet of American Beauty roses, Lloyd. The ambassador said nothing particularly offensive. Everybody knows that the Americans, like everyone else in the world, don't respect our claim to sovereignty in the high Arctic. Harper wasn't even asked about it by reporters, but he leaped on it anyway because it gave him the chance to look like he was exercising Prime Ministerial power even before he is one, and also a chance to see himself distancing himself from a George Bush and the White House.

ROBERTSON: So give us a brief sketch of what is the issue is here.

OLIVER: Well the Americans want to be able to move Alaskan oil and gas through the Northwest Passage, which they regard as an international strait, to the east coast. Second, they have security concerns. They're worried that, say, a North Korean missile carrying sub or ship might go up there and start firing at American cities. So if we don't defend it, as Harper wants to, the Americans certainly will.

ROBERTSON: Now Stephen Harper said today that he wants to move on same-sex marriage legislation sooner rather than later, but not immediately. How do we interpret that?

OLIVER: Well of course he wants to move soon because the opposition parties will kill that bill in about five minutes, and he'll be free and easy of it. His problem is not social policy. His problem will be the opening he's hoping to make with Quebec. He may open a Pandora's Box. The opposition, the Bloc Quebecois in particular, will be laying in wait. They will add other ornaments to whatever he wants to do and if he finds them difficult, they will accuse him of being in bad faith.

ROBERTSON: Thanks very much, Craig.

OLIVER: Goodnight, Lloyd.

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