



**The Honourable Edna Elias
Commissioner of Nunavut**

Northern Tour 2011

Iqaluit, Nunavut

June 17, 2011

Ullukut, Bonjour, Good Day. It is a great pleasure to welcome you to Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut. I am very excited to welcome you at the very beginning of your Northern Tour. I also want to wish the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade well as they are about to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Northern Tour.

Nunavut is 1/5th of Canada's land mass. As you travel throughout Nunavut, you will see our land is made up of an incredible landscape: vast open spaces, endless skies, and some of the most varied wildlife in the world. Whether you are camping, hiking, sea-kayaking or watching icebergs, a visit to Nunavut will allow you to explore a unique and diverse land.

It is my hope you will be excited to see the vast expanse of land and waters during your travels from region to region, and hospitality of our communities.

Nunavut has found itself the spokesperson on a number of issues that are garnering international attention – climate change is one of these issues. Although we emit a tiny fraction of the world's green house gas

emissions, we in Nunavut are the first to see and feel the effects of climate change. It threatens not only our land, but our culture and way of life. We are learning to adapt, while researching natural sources of energy to reduce our dependency on natural gas.

Another issue that is prominent in the media in Nunavut is sealing. Unfortunately, there is a lot of myth and misinformation in the media about the seal harvest. We in Nunavut are eager to tell our side of the story. For thousands of years, seals have been a vital resource – that is wild and sustainable – for Inuit survival in a very demanding environment. The seal is used for food, clothing, arts and crafts and high fashion design. Very little is wasted. Seal hunting has always been a central foundation of Inuit culture. It has sustained traditional sharing customs, a special knowledge of the seal and its ecosystem, and the passing on of skills and values from elders to youth.

The best way to get to know a culture is to visit it with an open mind and heart. I hope when you leave us you will share the story of the north with others. Thank you all for coming. Quana