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- *ArcticNet project profile (2008-11)*
- *Scientific priority issues*



## Project profile #2 - September 2010

## Climate change and commercial shipping development in the Arctic

## Summary

The Arctic ice is receding, as ice extent in the summer is decreasing fast, faster than models predicted. The perspective of an ice-free Arctic in the summer is looming, with talks of riches to be exploited (oil, gas, minerals) and seaways developing across it between Europe and Asia. The perspective of a dramatic development in Arctic shipping triggered the debate in Canada as to how to assert Canada's sovereignty so as to protect the environment.



## Arctic shipping development

But is shipping really going to develop this fast? What segments of the shipping industry could be interested in playing a seasonal, poorly mapped, unserved northern route? Will containerized cargo liners between Europe and Asia rush to the route?



## Arctic community vs. shipping

This research would therefore focus on the question: to what extent will shipping develop in the Northwest and Northeast Passages, and with what kind of shipping: will it be transit shipping, fishing, tourism, transportation induced by natural resources mining? What do shipping firms think about it, and why?

It is the pace and extent of shipping development that will, probably, determine to what extent international pressure will be mounting on Canada's claim : a gradually growing traffic will enable Canada to adapt to the new situation and assert its regulatory authority.

## Study site locations



*Resolute, Cambridge Bay  
Iqaluit  
Pond Inlet  
Kugluktuk*

## Local collaborations

City of Iqaluit  
Government of Nunavut

## Questions to Researchers

ArcticNet recognizes the importance of framing climate change issues from various perspectives. Below we are asking a few questions to the project leaders in order to identify scientific priority issues and demonstrate how the research results can be used by policy and decision-makers in terms of community and climate change adaptation planning in the Eastern Canadian Arctic.

*1) From your own research perspective can you identify and describe the key issues that are (will be?) affecting social, economic or environmental conditions in the Eastern Canadian Arctic?*

Shipping is likely to keep increasing as it is already doing in the Arctic, but only scenarios and speculations tried to describe so far what kind of shipping and what kind of routes. Will it be transit or destinations? Will it carry potentially polluting material (oil for instance) or general cargo? And beyond the risks, what opportunities does shipping also provide, like tourism, natural resources exploitation, and a better and cheaper supply of consumer goods for local communities?

*2) How will your ArcticNet project contribute to a better understanding of these issues affecting the Eastern Canadian Arctic?*

The focus of the research is to determine what kind of ships are likely to ply Canadian Arctic waters, and in what numbers. Up to now, scenarios usually assumed shipping would develop fast, but assumptions need to be checked so as to get a more accurate picture. Defining adequate Arctic policies must rest on a clear picture of the perceptions and strategies among shipping companies, not on fears or common sense that may well prove deceptive.

*3) Provide an example of how the results of your project may contribute to the decision-making process with respect to these issues.*

Should we expect many ships to come, then it would be an argument to upgrade our surveillance capacities. On the contrary, preliminary results point a low interest among shipping companies for transit routes across the Arctic. This does not mean Canada should not make sure regulations are enforced.

The research also aims at defining what kind of ships are likely to come. Among them, it is likely tankers and bulk cargo ships, attracted by mineral resources, will represent the main category. This means if an accident happens, it would be much messier than with a container ship. However, this kind of traffic would not be transit, but destination (going to the Arctic to pick up oil or ore): legal tools must be adapted to be able to adequately control such traffic.

## General information

Contact us if you have suggestions, feedback or questions regarding the research projects presented in this newsletter.

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## Upcoming Newsletter

### Researcher

David Barber

### Research project

Sea Ice of the Arctic

