

Sweden to share data supporting Canada's Arctic claims

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In this September 23, 2015 photo, ice chunks are seen in the Northwest Passage in the Canadian High Arctic

Canada and Sweden have reached a deal to share data that could help support Canadian claims to a vast swath of the Arctic beyond its natural borders, Ottawa announced Friday.

The two northern nations signed a new five-year "Arctic science

cooperation agreement" during a meeting in Stockholm between Canada's Science Minister Kristy Duncan and Bjorn Dahlback, head of the Swedish Polar Research Secretariat.

Its primary goal is to establish a framework for collaborating on Arctic issues such as the development of new fisheries, as well as environmental and marine navigation regulations tailored for this pristine yet unforgiving region.

One component of the deal, which builds on a 2010 pact between the two Arctic Council members, also concerns "data gathering in support of Canada's extended continental shelf submission for the Arctic Ocean," the Canadian government said in a statement.

"Understanding the Arctic matters more now than ever because of global challenges such as climate change," Duncan said.

"Collaboration with Sweden will help Canada's scientists collect data to better understand northern ecosystems, which in turn will help us develop more effective evidence-based policies to protect our polar regions."

After a decade of surveying the country's far north seabed and gathering evidence in support of its claim to an expansive Arctic archipelago and surrounding waters, Canada filed a UN application in December 2013 signaling its intention to also claim the North Pole.

This, however, put Canada at odds with Russia, Denmark, the United States and Norway, which have overlapping claims in the polar region.

Interest in the Arctic has flared up in recent years as rising temperatures open up shipping routes and make hitherto inaccessible mineral resources easier to exploit.

Nations are currently entitled to a 200-nautical-mile economic zone from their coastlines, but claims for extending their territories are to be decided under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

In order to be successful, Canada must show that its [continental shelf](#) extends beneath the North Pole and other parts in its claim.

Despite concerted efforts to survey the ice-covered, difficult to access Arctic, a large part remains uncharted, because mapping expeditions are deemed too treacherous.

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