



Demand Better Security

The Conservative Plan for Defence

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(Outside CFB Trenton)**



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Introduction

Conservatives are deeply concerned by the threats facing Canada and its allies in a dangerous, interconnected world.

For too long, Canada's defence policy has wallowed in strategic drift. The men and women of Canada's proud military have struggled to live up to the high expectations of the government and the public. In return they have received little more than rhetorical support.

The response of the federal Liberal government to the new security environment has been underfunding to the point of strategic and moral neglect.

The result has been a dramatic decline in Canadian relevance and credibility on the world stage. The Conservative vision is to realize Canada's potential as a leading nation – to better defend our national interests and promote the values of Canadians.

It is time to acknowledge that the status quo can no longer continue.

The Conservative vision for a “big Canada,” realizing its potential as a leading nation in the world, suggests that bold and decisive action is required to replenish our human and material resources in the Canadian Forces. This vision is both strategically necessary and economically affordable.

It is also a vision that Canadians share.

Funding

Liberal Record

For some time it has been evident that the resources allocated to national defence are inadequate, even to meet the goals of the Liberal Government's own 1994 Defence White Paper. The result has been multibillion-dollar deficits in the defence operations, maintenance and capital spending accounts, as well as the constant danger of future base closures, operational curtailments, retirement of major platforms, and postponement of urgent capital renewal initiatives. As a percentage of the size of our economy, Canada's defence spending level is lower than that of every NATO country except Luxembourg.

Conservative Commitment

A Conservative government will inject an immediate \$1.2 billion per year into the military for equipment replacement, with a longer-term goal of moving toward the NATO European average as a percentage of GDP.

Liberal Confusion

Defence Minister David Pratt authored a House Defence Committee report in May 2002 that recommended, "The government increase the annual base budget for the Department of National Defence to between 1.5% to 1.6% of GDP, with the increase to be phased in over the next three years, and continue to move towards the NATO average." The total NATO average that Pratt refers to includes the large U.S. defence outlays, and is thus considerably higher than the NATO European average.

Similarly, in November 2002, Senate Defence Committee Chair Colin Kenney authored a report that recommended, "The Committee reiterates that the four billion dollar increase in defence spending recommended in our earlier report is the minimum required, and that the full increase is required immediately."

Former Liberal Deputy Prime Minister John Manley said in October 2001, Canada faces a "glaring inadequacy" in its defence capabilities that is compromising the country's international credibility: "You can't just sit at the G8 table and then, when the bill comes, go to the washroom... If you want to play a role in the world, even as a small member of the G8, there's a cost to doing that."

In April 2003, Paul Martin said, "The current gap between expectations and our military capacity is too large... Merely rebuilding Canada's armed forces will not suffice." In May 2004, Paul Martin said he would fund the military at an even higher level and allow it "to grow, consistent with what I think is going to be a very ambitious role in the world."

Personnel

Liberal Record

Since 1993, personnel levels in the Canadian Forces have been cut from more than 80,000 to roughly 52,400 effective. Today the Liberal record is clear: regular force personnel levels are far too low, with too many personnel serving back-to-back rotations overseas. The rigours of the new security environment demand an increase in front-line and vital support trade personnel.

Conservative Commitment

A Conservative government will progressively increase the strength of the regular force over the long term to at least 80,000 personnel, along with simultaneous increases in reserve personnel levels.

Liberal Confusion

Defence Minister David Pratt authored a House Defence Committee report in May 2002 that stated, “The reduction to 60,000 was bad enough given the increased tempo of operations which occurred during the 1990s. The Forces and especially the Army became overstretched, but the decline below 60,000 exacerbated the problems.”

Similarly, in February 2002, Senate Defence Committee Chair Colin Kenney authored a report that recommended, “to sustain the level of tasking required of them over the last eight years, the Canadian Forces need at least 75,000 trained effective personnel.”

Army

Liberal Record

The army has borne much of the burden associated with the Liberal government's over-deployment of the Canadian Forces and is being forced to draw down its peacekeeping commitments. The army is now demonstrating an inability to deploy anything more than progressively smaller contingents.

Conservative Commitment

A Conservative government will give priority to strengthening high demand units, such as infantry, logistical, and medical units that are relevant to operations ranging from domestic disaster assistance to overseas peace support and combat operations.

Liberal Confusion

In October 2002, Defence Minister David Pratt said, "We would have difficulty putting... a battle group or a battalion together for any longer than about six months."



Liberal Record

The Liberal government's failure to provide the army with better and timelier strategic lift resources has led them to scrap Canada's ageing tank fleet for wheeled vehicles. Rather than "harden" the army, the Liberals plan to "lighten up" the army and increase its vulnerability. Canada currently has the smallest tank force in NATO and will soon join Iceland and Luxembourg as the only NATO countries without tanks. Meanwhile, every other NATO country is modernizing its tanks. A Canadian military scientific report warned the government five years ago that replacing Canada's tanks with wheeled vehicles would cost Canadian lives and "would be morally and ethically wrong."

Conservative Commitment

A Conservative government will reconsider the plan to replace Canada's tank force with lighter wheeled vehicles, in favour of the acquisition of a modest number of main battle tanks from NATO allied stocks.

Liberal Confusion

In October 2003, when faced with numerous reports and extensive evidence that tanks should not be scrapped for wheeled vehicles, former Defence Minister John McCallum heaped scorn on Canada's defence experts: "I do not take advice from dated reports, retired military and the opposition."



Liberal Record

The 1994 Liberal Defence White Paper committed to providing a brigade in support of any potential multinational security crises. Today most analysts agree that this commitment can no longer be met, despite the critical need for Canada to retain the flexibility to deploy effective and self-supporting ground formations to serve overseas with our allies when required.

Conservative Commitment

A Conservative government will ensure that the army is large enough to deploy and sustain at least one all-arms brigade-sized formation (at least 5,000 troops) overseas to support and command multilateral missions when necessary.

Liberal Confusion

In November 2002, Senate Defence Committee Chair Colin Kenney authored a report that criticized the Liberal White Paper brigade commitment: “Canada has never been able to sustain this type of commitment. Bosnia and Afghanistan demonstrated clearly that Canada’s military can hardly manage to support half of this commitment.”

Air Force

Liberal Record

After a long wait, the Liberal government has only recently introduced measures to enhance the serviceability of the CF-18 fighter fleet, and to enhance its range through the re-constitution of an aerial re-fuelling capability. Furthermore, during the 1999 Kosovo air campaign, the air force quickly ran out of air-to-ground munitions, forcing Canada to “borrow” from the United States.

Conservative Commitment

A Conservative government will ensure that the CF-18 fleet upgrades continue as a high priority and are accompanied by a purchase of modern ordnance to ensure the viability of the fighter fleet.

Liberal Confusion

Defence Minister David Pratt authored a House Defence Committee report in May 2002 that stated, “The radar and other electronic equipment aboard the CF-18s are the same as when the aircraft were delivered in the 1980s and, as everyone knows, computer technology from the 1970s and 1980s hardly compares with what is available today... the dated electronic and communications equipment are jeopardizing the ability of the fleet to operate safely and effectively with allied forces in combat situations... the Committee is concerned that the upgrading is only now starting, that it will be 2006 before the project is completed, and that only 80 of Canada’s 120 or so CF-18s will be updated.”



Liberal Record

As a result of Liberal underfunding, Canada’s fleet of CC-130 Hercules transport aircraft is no longer sufficiently serviceable to adequately meet domestic and international commitments. Furthermore, it is now recognized that the prospects of Canada obtaining timely access to commercial and allied aircraft capable of carrying out-sized cargo will decrease over the next decade as a result of increased demand and diminishing serviceability. The Liberal government has quashed every plan proposed by the Air Force to acquire a strategic airlift capability for Canada.

Conservative Commitment

A Conservative government will immediately initiate a project to replace the older CC-130 transport aircraft, along with a form of acquisition for heavy-lift transport aircraft.

Liberal Confusion

Defence Minister David Pratt authored a House Defence Committee report in May 2002 that recommended, “Canada acquire additional heavy lift transport aircraft and replace older models to ensure the strategic and tactical airlift capacity required to rapidly and effectively deploy the personnel and equipment required for overseas operations.”

**Liberal Record**

In today's dangerous security environment it is critical for Canada to have modern maritime helicopters in order to exercise control of coastal waters and provide support to land forces stationed ashore. Despite this the Liberal government failed to replace Canada's ageing Sea King fleet, which has resulted in high serviceability costs, major safety concerns, and serious availability decreases.

Conservative Commitment

A Conservative government will ensure that a Sea King replacement is found promptly, in a manner that maximizes long-term cost-effectiveness and enhances the multi-mission capabilities of these helicopters.

Liberal Confusion

Defence Minister David Pratt authored a House Defence Committee report in May 2002 that stated, "the replacement of these helicopters must not be delayed any further... there is still considerable concern about the safety of operating such old aircraft... the Committee is greatly concerned that the process of selecting and acquiring the new helicopters is taking too much time."

Navy

Liberal Record

The Liberal government has failed to ensure that the navy retain sufficient naval capability to perform a range of overseas crisis management and resolution operations. The navy must be primarily expeditionary in nature, with the ability to control the littorals, provide leadership and support to multi-ship task groups, and to provide support to land forces stationed ashore. In contrast to the Liberal government, several of Canada's allies – including the United Kingdom, Spain, the Netherlands and Australia – are moving to deploy larger and more capable multi-mission surface combatants.

Conservative Commitment

A Conservative government will progressively introduce a new single surface combatant, beginning with the replacement of Canada's ageing Iroquois-class destroyers.

Liberal Confusion

Defence Minister David Pratt authored a House Defence Committee report in May 2002 that recommended, "The project for the replacement of the four Tribal class destroyers with new warships with superior command and control as well as air defence capabilities should proceed.



Liberal Record

After years of delay, the Liberal government has finally announced that it will replace the ageing Protecteur-class replenishment ships with three Joint Supply Ships (JSS). However, the navy must have a greater sealift capacity and ability to support forces ashore than the JSS would provide.

Conservative Commitment

A Conservative government will procure at least two hybrid carriers configured for helicopter support and vehicle transport with space for at least 800 soldiers and their armoured equipment, as well as sufficient deck and hanger space for up to a dozen maritime helicopters (composed of Sea King replacements – with an expanded order number as required).

Liberal Confusion

Liberal Prime Minister Lester Pearson utilized the Canadian aircraft carrier HMCS Magnificent for the essential strategic sealift and offshore support at the Suez peacekeeping mission that won Canada the Nobel Peace Prize. Today, the Liberal government cannot trade on this record of achievement without a comparable investment.

Coastal Protection

Liberal Record

The Liberal government has not ensured adequate capacity for Canada's maritime fleets where it is most needed. Since domestic maritime security threats are largely criminal in nature, the non-military arms of the maritime security apparatus should play a central role in the regulation of activity in our territorial waters. The use of large naval vessels for what are essentially constabulary tasks is not cost-effective and should be contemplated only under exceptional circumstances.

Conservative Commitment

A Conservative government will establish a single civilian agency for domestic maritime security enforcement – that is, a stronger, independent Canadian Coast Guard with new duties for national security.

Liberal Confusion

In October 2003, Senate Defence Committee Chair Colin Kenney authored a report that detailed and defined Canada's "coastlines on the Atlantic, on the Pacific, and in the Arctic as the longest under-defended borders in the world." The report further recommended, "The federal government take immediate steps to transform the Canadian Coast Guard from an agency that reports to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to an independent agency responsible to Parliament and carrying out its duties – search and rescue, ice-breaking, navigational aids, buoy tending, boat safety, fisheries and environment protection – plus new responsibilities for national security."



Liberal Record

The Liberal government has not adequately utilized radar, satellite, and aerial surveillance over our vast national territory. While the Liberal government recently introduced the High Frequency Surface Wave radar system on a portion of Canada's East Coast, the network has not been expanded to give full coverage out to 200 nautical miles on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. The Liberal government is also not yet employing Canada's cost-saving satellites for maritime security surveillance. Finally, the Liberal government has not seen fit to acquire any long-range unmanned air vehicles, which would provide longer endurance and lower operating costs for both domestic and international missions.

Conservative Commitment

A Conservative government will expand the High Frequency Surface Wave radar system for full coverage on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, effectively employ Canada's satellite capability, and acquire long-range unmanned air vehicles (UAVs).

Liberal Confusion

Defence Minister David Pratt authored a House Defence Committee report in May 2002 that stated, “satellites used for communications, navigation, and surveillance are increasingly vital elements to the readiness of any military force.”

Parliament

Liberal Record

The Liberal government has not brought Parliament into the defence policy and budgetary processes in a meaningful way. During the recent war in Kosovo, which occurred without UN Security Council approval, the Liberal government did not ask Parliament to ratify the decision to send troops. The national defence budget is the single largest discretionary item of government expenditures and Canadian military personnel are frequently engaged in dangerous missions. Parliament must rightly oversee these issues to ensure defence relevance, credibility, and affordability on behalf of all Canadians.

Conservative Commitment

A Conservative government will permit Parliament to debate and ratify overseas deployments of Canadian troops to combat missions and empower the House of Commons Defence Committee to review and influence annual funding levels for national defence projects, senior Defence Staff appointments, and legislated defence policy updates between election cycles.

Liberal Confusion

In February 2004, Prime Minister Paul Martin said, “Parliament should be the centre of national debate on policy. For this to happen, we must reconnect Parliament to Canadians and renew the capacity of Parliamentarians – from all parties – to shape policy and legislation.” In 1993, Paul Martin authored the Liberal Red Book, which stated, “A Liberal government will also expand the rights of Parliament to debate major Canadian foreign policy initiatives, such as the deployment of peacekeeping forces.”

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