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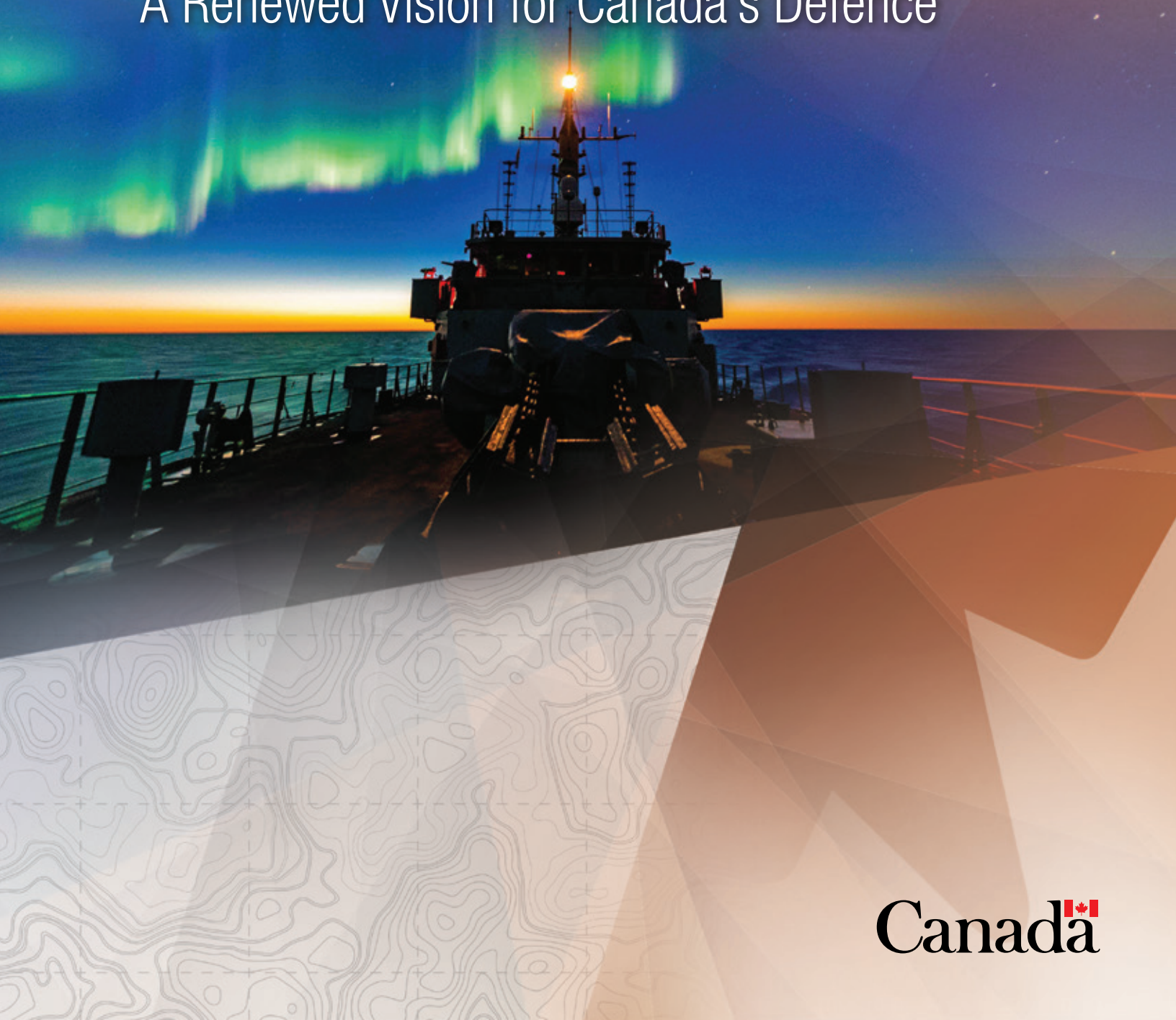
Défense  
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CANADIAN  
ARMED FORCES

# Our North, Strong and Free:

A Renewed Vision for Canada's Defence



Canada 

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# MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL DEFENCE



One of the most important roles of any government is to protect its country and its people. In a rapidly changing world, we are committed to fulfilling this essential responsibility.

National Defence's spending is increasing. We are now on track to more than double defence spending from 2016-17 to 2026-27. But our world has evolved significantly in the past few years, and we need to do more to respond.

Here at home, Canadians are depending more and more on the Canadian Armed Forces—our Regular and Reserve Forces and our Canadian Rangers. Extreme weather events are causing provinces and territories to call on our military much more often.

In our North, we need to confront the reality of climate change. Our Arctic is warming at four times the global average, opening the region to the world, which was previously protected by the Polar Ice Cap year-round. By 2050, the Arctic Ocean could become the most efficient shipping route between Europe and East Asia. We are seeing greater Russian activity in our air approaches, and a growing number of Chinese vessels and surveillance platforms are mapping and collecting data about the region. Meanwhile, states are rapidly building up their military capabilities in ways that impact our security in the Arctic—including submarines, long-range aircraft and hypersonic missiles that move faster and are harder to detect. As the Arctic becomes more accessible to foreign actors, we need to ensure our military has the tools to assert our sovereignty and protect Canada's interests.

At the same time, Canada's interests do not stop at our border. Russia's illegal and unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine is an attack on the system of international rules and institutions that enable the security and prosperity of Canada and Cana-

dians; we must remain steadfast in our support for Ukraine. Furthermore, as an increasingly assertive China challenges the international order in the Indo-Pacific, Canada must maintain a reliable, persistent military presence to uphold the global rules that underpin our prosperity and sovereignty.

Today we are confronted with a complex, generational challenge. The world is at an inflection point. Democracy, free trade, and the rules and values that underpin them are increasingly being contested by authoritarian states. In parallel, the character of conflict is changing as technology evolves rapidly. Ultimately, our closest values of democracy, freedom, peace, and fairness—which Canadians have fought and died to defend—are being challenged.

Our government is committed to preserving these values for the next generation of Canadians, so that they can enjoy the same security and prosperity that was given to us by our parents.

When the Berlin Wall fell and the Cold War ended, many democracies—including Canada—scaled back defence investments and shrunk their militaries.

By 2013, defence spending had fallen to 1% of our gross domestic product.

Today, a more challenging and uncertain geopolitical context demands greater investment to protect Canada, work with allies and defend the rules and principles that govern a peaceful and prosperous international order. Since 2015, the government has steadily and significantly increased funding for the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence. In 2017 we released *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, Canada's defence policy, to ensure long-term, predictable, stable funding to National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces.

Six years on, Canada's defence spending remains on an upward trajectory, consistent with our commitment to meet the North Atlantic Treaty

Organization's (NATO) Defence Investment Pledge. We are acquiring new fighter jets and maritime patrol aircraft, and new built-in-Canada Arctic and Offshore Patrol Vessels have been delivered to Canadian sailors. In 2022 we invested \$38.6 billion to modernize our contribution to the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD).

Although we have made important strides to build up our Canadian Armed Forces, there is more work to do.

*Our North, Strong and Free* outlines our plan to do more: to build a Canadian Armed Forces that can keep us strong at home, secure in North America, and engaged in the world.

We will strengthen the foundations of the Canadian Armed Forces to enable future growth, by taking fresh, new approaches. To reverse an unsustainable trend of attrition, we will implement modern recruitment measures that can help us fill the gap between our authorized force size and our actual force size, and we will build a more supportive and inclusive culture to improve retention. To accelerate a process that takes too long to deliver the capabilities we need, we will adapt our defence procurement system to a faster, more competitive age, including through a renewed relationship with Canada's defence industry and a focus on innovation with trusted partners. We will invest in the modern military capabilities needed to deliver security to Canadians at home and protect Canadians interests around the world.

Through this policy, Canada will invest \$8.1 billion over the next five years and \$73 billion over the next 20 years in our national defence.

This significant increase in defence spending reflects Canada's commitment to reach defence expenditures of 2% of gross domestic product and invest 20% of our defence expenditures on equipment, as agreed by NATO members at the Vilnius Summit in 2023. The government is projecting our defence spending to GDP ratio to reach 1.76% in 2029-30 and initiatives under this policy also put Canada on track to exceed NATO's target of 20%

for major equipment expenditures as a proportion of defence funding. Consistent with our commitment, this policy also lays the foundations for future growth in the Canadian Armed Forces, including through a more regular and rapid cycle of further review and investment.

*Our North, Strong and Free* supports our broader interests and values, as well as our engagement with allies and international partners. This policy will contribute to Arctic security, strengthen our role within NATO and advance our Indo-Pacific Strategy. It advances the goals of our Arctic and Northern Policy Framework. It will help Canada continue to support nations in crisis. Supporting our broader engagement in the world, it will contribute to United Nations initiatives in support of international peace and stability, including UN Security Council Resolution 1325, Defence commitments articulated in *Foundations for Peace: Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security*, the Vancouver Principles on Peacekeeping and the Prevention of the Recruitment and Use of Child Soldiers, and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. We will also build new partnerships with Indigenous peoples in the North, working together to advance our national defence together and prioritize reconciliation.

*Our North, Strong and Free* also supports Canada's industrial policy, and Canadian industry will find in this policy greater clarity and certainty to support our defence mission in Canada.

Of course, none of this work is possible without our people. Through this policy and ongoing measures, we are committed to investing in them—and ensuring they have the tools to do their jobs in a healthy, safe, and supportive environment.

To everyone at the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces: thank you for your dedication to protecting Canada. With this plan and the outstanding work already underway in our institution, I am more confident than ever in the future of our organization and its ability to carry out its vital mission.

The Honourable William Sterling Blair, PC, COM, MP  
Minister of National Defence

# MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



The security, well-being and prosperity of every Canadian is directly influenced by global security and stability. Our world has become more turbulent, and unpredictable. War has broken in Europe, Africa and the Middle East, organized criminal groups are terrorizing streets in Haiti and

Central America, and great power competition in the Indo-Pacific has deepened, with historical inter-state tensions flaring or re-emerging. Simply put, we find ourselves amidst an international security crisis, one that is compounded by increasingly complex, modern challenges such as climate change and artificial intelligence.

We can no longer rely on Canada's geography—surrounded by three oceans—to protect us. As our competitors adopt an increasingly assertive role on the world stage, including through increased investments in their militaries and in new military technologies, the range of threats to Canada and to Canadians has expanded.

Canada must meet these new and emerging threats with resolve. Vigorous assertion of our sovereignty, particularly in the Canadian Arctic, is a fundamental priority. Pragmatic diplomacy will be critical to shaping outcomes that reflect our values and interests. *Our North, Strong and Free* helps position Canada to do just that.

More than ever, defence and diplomacy go hand in hand in pursuing our national interest. We have seen the important ways in which the Canadian Armed Forces underpin our diplomatic efforts around the world. They help uphold the international order and support our allies and partners, including in the Arctic, Ukraine and the Euro-Atlantic region, the Indo-Pacific, Haiti, Latin America, and Africa. We are proud of our people, their dedi-

cation and commitment to reinforcing Canadian interests. And so, we will be there with increased resources to ensure they are well supported, with the equipment and tools they need to do their job effectively.

Canada's reliability as a friend and ally is vital to our own security and to our sovereignty. Canada is an active contributor to NORAD, NATO, the United Nations system, and wider multilateral institutions. We are working with our allies and partners to ensure that these organizations are resilient, inclusive and fit-for-purpose to meet ever-evolving peace and security challenges. Further investments in our military are essential to safeguarding our interests, advancing respect for human rights and gender equality, contributing to international peace and security, demonstrating our commitment as a reliable ally, and contributing towards our goal of reaching the 2% defence spending target agreed upon by NATO Allies.

Canada's defence policy was updated with this in mind. It reinforces the fundamental principles and multilateral partners upon which our security, prosperity, and global interests depend. It strengthens our contributions to Euro-Atlantic security, bolsters our Indo-Pacific Strategy and reinforces our commitments to women, peace, and security and inclusive and sustainable development and prosperity for all. It also helps ensure that Canada's levers of soft and hard power complement each other, with diplomacy as a key tool in our approach to securing our interests and promoting our values and with military capacity available when needed to back it up.

Canadians have a proud tradition of helping to address some of the most pressing global issues of our time. *Our North, Strong and Free* will complement our overall international engagement—from diplomacy, to development, to trade and investment—as we continue to uphold Canada's values and interests in a changing world.

The Honourable Mélanie Joly, PC, MP  
Minister of Foreign Affairs

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Canadians have benefitted enormously from the world we helped build. We came of age as a country in an era defined by a respect for international rules that have generated prosperity on an unprecedented scale. That prosperity depends on free and open trade with the world and stable conditions.

The return of war in Europe, with Russia's illegal and unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine, reminds us that military challenges to global stability violate state sovereignty and other fundamental principles of international law, impose terrible human costs, disrupt global supply chains, and raise the cost of groceries, fuel and basic necessities. Russia has demonstrated that it is a reckless and hostile adversary willing to undermine peace and stability in pursuit of its goals, which is a reminder that Canadians cannot take global security for granted. As a trading nation connected to and affected by everything that happens in the world, we have an obligation to Canadians to help defend and preserve the conditions that have made prosperity and security possible for so many, for so long.

Three powerful, connected trends are now reshaping our world:

- Climate change is disproportionately affecting our Arctic. It is becoming increasingly accessible, and we are facing new security challenges in the region;
- Autocracies and disruptive states are challenging the international order that keeps Canada safe and prosperous, propelled by Russia's flagrant violation of international law and China's attempts to reshape the international order to achieve its political goals; and
- New and disruptive technologies are rapidly redefining conflict and what it takes to be safe and secure.

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*Our best insurance against global uncertainty at home and abroad is a ready, resilient, and relevant Canadian Armed Forces, made up of Regular and Reserve Forces, and the Canadian Rangers*

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Our best insurance against global uncertainty at home and abroad is a ready, resilient, and relevant Canadian Armed Forces, made up of Regular and Reserve Forces, and the Canadian Rangers. **Ready**, with sufficient numbers of well-trained, motivated and supported people, enabled by the right equipment in the right timeframes, and working with safe and effective infrastructure; **Resilient**, with forces that are sustained on operations for as long as necessary, can operate across the land, sea, air, cyber and space domains, and are digitalized and networked for the information age; and **Relevant**, with forces making robust contributions where it matters most to Canada, with capabilities that are suited to the type of contributions we need to make.

Alongside our diplomatic and security capabilities, a strong military protects Canada's ability to make sovereign, independent decisions in our best interests and limits our adversaries' ability to coerce or shape our courses of action. It gives Canada a voice in North American defence, secures NATO's northern and western flanks from military aggression or coercion, ensures our place in broader international partnerships, and creates the conditions for our future economic prosperity. A strong military also creates economic opportunities for Canadians, furthers collaboration with Indigenous and Northern communities, supports good, middle-class jobs, and builds up Canada's defence industrial base.



To ensure that our military has the resources it requires to keep Canadians safe in an increasingly unpredictable world, Canada is investing more in defence.

The most urgent and important task we face is asserting Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic and northern regions, where the changing physical and geopolitical landscapes have created new threats and vulnerabilities to Canada and Canadians. This includes upgrading our continental defences to ensure they can deter threats or defeat them when necessary. In achieving this, we will engage closely with Indigenous partners and northern communities, whose homes and lifestyle are directly impacted by Canada's security and sovereignty. In defending the region, we will continue to support the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework's principle of "nothing about us, without us".

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***Additional funding of \$8.1 billion over the next five years and \$73 billion over the next 20 years, will ensure a ready, resilient and relevant Canadian Armed Forces***

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Underpinned by additional funding of \$8.1 billion over the next five years and \$73 billion over the next 20 years, *Our North, Strong and Free* prioritizes the defence of Canada by investing in a ready, resilient and relevant Canadian Armed Forces.

The government is projecting our defence spending to GDP ratio to reach 1.76% in 2029-30. This is a significant increase in defence spending and is a major step forward in our effort to reach 2% of GDP, as agreed by NATO members at the Vilnius Summit in 2023. Consistent with this commitment, *Our North, Strong and Free* also puts Canada on track to exceed NATO's target of 20% for major equipment expenditures as a proportion of defence funding, and lays the foundation for future growth in the Canadian Armed Forces, including through a more regular cycle of review.

To deliver on our vision for defence, **job one is strengthening the foundations** for future growth of our military in an increasingly challenging world.

This policy doubles down on our greatest asset—the members of our military—by boosting recruitment and retention and investing in them and in their families. We will rebuild the Cana-

dian Armed Forces to its established size and lay the foundations required to respond to increased domestic and international demands.

We will also increase the readiness of our military by updating our Royal Canadian Navy, Royal Canadian Air Force, Canadian Army and Special Operations Forces fleets. This includes investments in the accelerated maintenance and upgrades for all vehicles, ships and aircraft. It also involves recapitalizing and renewing aging military infrastructure across Canada to support training and operations and bolster our resilience to the effects of a changing climate.

We will make institutional investments in the Canadian Armed Forces and Department of National Defence, building civilian capacity, advancing defence procurement reform, fostering innovation, and digitalization.

We will build a stronger defence industrial base to support a more resilient, modern and sustainable military, including through a significant increase in the production of NATO-standard artillery ammunition, investing in innovation and improving our defence procurement system.

We will also acquire **new capabilities to defend against new threats** to Canada.

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***The most urgent and important task we face is asserting Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic and northern regions, where the changing physical and geopolitical landscapes have created new threats and vulnerabilities to Canada and Canadians***

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To better protect our Arctic and northern regions from emerging and existing threats—such as advanced submarines, hypersonic and cruise missiles, surveillance activities—and to enhance our ability to respond to emergencies and disasters, we will establish greater presence, reach, mobility, and responsiveness across Canada, including our Arctic, through a network of northern operational support hubs, a fleet of airborne early warning aircraft, deployable sensors on our coasts and underwater, a satellite ground station in the High Arctic, enhanced foreign intelligence capabilities, and new tactical helicopters.

Canada is committed to defending North America against aerospace threats in partnership with the United States. To complement and build on investments already made under our NORAD modernization plan, we will further explore Canada's integrated air and missile defence capabilities. This more robust approach to integrated air and missile defence will have significant benefits across all theatres in which Canada operates and strengthen our contribution to collective security.

We will also layer these defences with improved satellite capabilities, and enhancements to Canada's capacity in the cyber domain. We will establish a Canadian Armed Forces Cyber Command and, with the Communications Security Establishment, create a joint Canadian cyber operations capability.

When we are strong and secure at home, we can support our allies without fear of retaliation. In a world marked by great power competition, our investments will focus on our alliances and partnerships in the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions—two regions that are fundamental to safeguarding Canada's security and prosperity.

To better protect our members overseas and continue making meaningful Canadian contributions to international peace and security, particularly in support of NATO allies in Eastern Europe, we will modernize our forces and provide them with a greater ability to sustain themselves in conflict and strike at longer operational ranges than our adversaries.

We will broaden and deepen implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda within our own institutions and operations, and through bilateral partnerships and multilateral forums.

This is an ambitious program of work in a rapidly changing world. We will need to regularly adapt our approach and investments to the prevailing global context and Canada's national interests. Canada will move from the *ad hoc* generational investments of previous decades to a regular cycle of defence policy reviews. These reviews will be an integral component of new national security strategies, which will address Canada's broader approach to national security and be published on a four-year cycle. This new approach will ensure that our defence capabilities can grow and remain up to the task in a fluid and changing world, while also providing regular opportunities to engage

Canadians and Canadian industry on investments in defence.

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***Our North, Strong and Free is an investment in Canada and Canadians. It is an investment in our security and sovereignty***

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*Our North, Strong and Free* is an investment in Canada and Canadians. It is an investment in our security and sovereignty. It is an investment in the brave members of our military and in jobs across the country, in communities from coast to coast to coast, in the advanced technology innovation economy that will define our future, and in a more robust defence industrial base that will supply our troops and support tens of thousands of highly skilled jobs.

It is an investment in Canadian values and strengths, underpinning our Arctic and northern sovereignty, strengthening our diplomatic influence, leveraging our world-leading talent in cyber and space, advancing our shared goal of reconciliation with Indigenous partners, including through the Inuit Nunangat Policy, and advancing our ability to make uniquely Canadian contributions to global peace and security.



Finally, this is an investment in the alliances and partnerships that enable Canadian security and prosperity. Securing our Arctic will keep North America safe, allow us to support our allies abroad, and contribute to deterring global conflict. By bringing relevant, robust capabilities to NATO's northern and western flanks, Canada will make valuable contributions to our partnerships in Europe and the Indo-Pacific in defence of our shared security and prosperity.

# INTRODUCTION

A more challenging world is already having far-reaching impacts on the day-to-day lives of Canadians.

A rapidly changing climate, new challenges to global stability, and accelerating advances in technology are affecting the foundations of Canadian security and prosperity. *Our North, Strong and Free* responds to these trends with resolve and commitment.

Today more than ever, Canada needs a robust military that can defend Canada and protect Canadians at home, while defending our national interests abroad with allies and partners.

Our 2017 defence policy *Strong, Secure, Engaged* identified the evolving balance of power, the changing nature of conflict, and the rapid evolution of technology as the main drivers of the future security environment. In response, the government set a new course for our military. We articulated eight core missions for the Canadian Armed Forces at home, on the continent and in the world, which remain necessary and unchanged.

And we established a program of investment—in our people, growing the Canadian Armed Forces, and recapitalizing some core capabilities—that continues to be essential to Canada’s defence.

This defence policy review focused on, among other things, the size and capabilities of the Canadian Armed Forces, its roles and responsibilities, and ensuring our military has the resources needed to keep Canadians safe and contribute to global operations. We consulted the Canadian public, civil society, industry, parliamentarians, defence experts, and allies and partners to help inform the review.

The review concluded that the threats and challenges identified in 2017 are intensifying and evolving more quickly than anticipated, and that Canada needs to do more to keep pace. Today, we are confirming new investments to support a vision in which Canada is:

- Strong at home, with a military asserting our sovereignty, particularly in the Arctic and northern regions, and ready to assist when

## **The eight core missions of the Canadian Armed Forces are as follows:**

- Detect, deter, and defend against threats to or attacks on Canada;
- Detect, deter, and defend against threats to or the attack on North America in partnership with the United States, including through NORAD;
- Lead and/or contribute forces to NATO and coalition efforts to deter and defeat adversaries, including terrorists, to support global stability;
- Lead and/or contribute to international peace operations and stabilization missions with the United Nations, NATO and other multilateral partners;
- Engage in capacity building to support the security of other nations and their ability to contribute to security abroad;
- Provide assistance to civil authorities and law enforcement, including counter-terrorism, in support of national security and the security of Canadians abroad;
- Provide assistance to civil authorities and non-governmental partners in responding to international and domestic disasters or major emergencies; and
- Conduct search and rescue operations.

Canadians are faced with natural disasters and other emergencies, or in need of search and rescue support;

- Secure in North America, active in a renewed defence partnership with the United States that is focused on restoring continental defence and deterrence in all domains: sea, land, air, space and cyber, and through a modernized NORAD; and
- Engaged in the world, with the Canadian Armed Forces making reliable and valuable contributions to our allies and partners, particularly in the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions, in support of a more stable, peaceful world.

*Our North, Strong and Free* is laid out in four sections:

**Section I** assesses the current geopolitical context and the implications for Canadian interests.

**Section II** articulates an updated vision for our military, focused on ensuring the Canadian Armed Forces is ready, resilient and relevant in the new security environment—by investing in the foundations of the military and new capabilities to defend against new threats to Canada.

**Sections III and IV** outline our plan to deliver on this vision, focused on strengthening the foundations of our military, modernizing existing capabilities and acquiring new ones, improving our capacity to implement through building civilian capacity, reforming procurement, digitalizing the military, leveraging innovation, and developing a stronger relationship with Canada's defence industrial base.

# I. CANADA IN A TIME OF GLOBAL UNCERTAINTY

Canadian security and prosperity in the coming years will be affected by three key trends: a more open and accessible Arctic and northern region driven by climate change, increasing global instability, and rapid advances in technology.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS DESTABILIZING IMPACTS ON OUR ARCTIC AND NORTH**

The accelerating pace of climate change will create new security challenges and magnify existing ones at home and around the world. Canada needs to invest further in addressing these challenges so that it can prepare for longer-term changes, and stay prepared.

Climate change is having devastating impacts on Canadians from coast to coast to coast every year, as climate-related emergencies increase in frequency and scale. The Canadian Armed Forces, including our Regular and Reserve Forces and the Canadian Rangers, is helping meet a growing need to support civil authorities in natural disaster response, both at home and abroad, and will

continue to respond to calls for help. In 2023, Canada had its worst fire season in 30 years, requiring evacuations in communities across the country, and the deployment of more than 2100 members to six provinces and territories for more than four months to assist. This had particularly devastating effects on the North, requiring the entire city of Yellowknife to evacuate and affecting multiple Indigenous communities. Since 2010, Canadian Armed Forces operations in response to natural disasters have roughly doubled every five years.

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*Although climate change is a global problem, it is having particularly serious effects on our Arctic and northern regions, presenting new and escalating challenges with a range of implications for Canada's security*

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Although climate change is a global problem, it is having particularly serious effects on our Arctic and northern regions, presenting new and escalating challenges with a range of implications for Canada's security.



Our Arctic and North is an integral part of our country, home to 150,000 Canadians and generations of Indigenous communities. We have an obligation to work with communities in defending the region and securing their ability to take advantage of opportunities in a rapidly changing environment. Defending this vast and challenging region, with coastlines and territory larger than the entirety of most other Arctic nations, a harsh climate, and limited physical and communications infrastructure, requires full community engagement and rethinking how we approach the defence of our country.

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***Canada's Northwest Passage and the broader Arctic region are already more accessible, and competitors are not waiting to take advantage***

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***Defending the Arctic is asserting Canadian sovereignty. To do so, we must take a new approach that improves and modernizes our defences in the region***

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Our Arctic is now warming at four times the global average, making a vast and sensitive region more accessible to foreign actors who have growing capabilities and regional military ambitions. By 2050, the Arctic Ocean could become the most efficient shipping route between Europe and East Asia. Canada's Northwest Passage and the broader Arctic region are already more accessible, and competitors are not waiting to take advantage—seeking access, transportation routes, natural resources, critical minerals, and energy sources through more frequent and regular presence and activity. They are exploring Arctic waters and the sea floor, probing our infrastructure and collecting intelligence. We are seeing more Russian activity

in our air approaches, and a growing number of Chinese dual-purpose research vessels and surveillance platforms collecting data about the Canadian North that is, by Chinese law, made available to China's military.

For decades, we aimed to manage the Arctic and northern regions cooperatively, as a zone free from military threats. Yet Russia continues to modernize and build up its military presence in their Arctic, investing in new bases and infrastructure. It is highly capable of projecting air, naval and missile forces both in and through the broader Arctic region. Russia also possesses a robust Arctic naval presence with submarines, surface combatants and an icebreaker fleet much larger than those of other Arctic powers.

Similarly, despite not being an Arctic nation, China seeks to become a "polar great power" by 2030 and is demonstrating an intent to play a larger role in the region. The steady growth of its navy, including its conventional and nuclear-powered submarine fleet, will support this ambition. China is also expanding its investments, infrastructure and industrial scientific influence throughout the Arctic region.

These trends and dynamics have important impacts on Canadian security, and directly shape our vision for the future of defence in Canada and the initiatives set out in this defence policy.

Defending the Arctic is asserting Canadian sovereignty. To do so, we must take a new approach that improves and modernizes our defences in the region.

This means establishing greater presence, reach, mobility, and responsiveness in the Arctic and North to deal with disasters, threats and challenges to our sovereignty. It also means that our Arctic waters, airspace, and territory cannot be vulnerable to intrusion or used as an avenue to harm Canada, our closest ally, the United States, or other NATO allies. Our contributions to securing the Arctic are an important component in the defence of NATO's western and northern flanks,



and directly support broader NATO deterrence efforts. They will enable Canada to engage the world from a position of strength.

In our tightly integrated world, investments to secure Canada and protect Canadians also make direct contributions to global security. Canada and the United States share the unique responsibility of securing NATO's western boundaries and contributing to the defence of the Alliance from a position of strength. And together with our Arctic allies, we are responsible for the defence of NATO's northern boundaries. When Canada is secure in North America, the Canadian Armed Forces can also deploy forces abroad quickly and decisively, without exposing Canada or Canadians to threats or retaliation. Canadian and North American security reduces the ability of authoritarian powers to dictate the terms of our foreign and defence policies. It keeps Canada ready to assist our allies in deterring conflict in the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions.

All of this points to the need for greater investment in our domestic defences, particularly in our Arctic. Alongside our diplomatic, security, and intelligence capabilities, a strong military protects Canada's ability to make sovereign, independent decisions in our best interests and limits our adversaries' ability to coerce or shape our courses of action. It makes Canada a valued partner in North American defence and secures our place in alliances and broader international partnerships.

## CHALLENGES TO THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER

The stable and predictable world in which Canada has thrived is under increasing strain. The established rules of international relations—the respect for sovereignty, adherence to international law,

and foundational commitments to human rights including gender equality—have been challenged or undermined in both significant and subtle ways by disruptive states seeking to redefine the international order or advance their interests at the expense of others. At the same time, security challenges associated with state fragility and failure, as well as malicious activity by non-state actors in the world and online impact Canadians and their national security.

## STRATEGIC COMPETITION

Strategic competition over the international norms and rules that will define the future is centred in the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions. As an Atlantic and Pacific nation that shares a continent with the United States, Canada lies at the geographic middle of this contest—resulting in direct and tangible impacts on our security and prosperity, generating new expectations about Canada's role in the context of that rivalry.

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*Collective defence remains the cornerstone of our national security. We are a founding member of NATO, the world's largest, strongest and most successful military Alliance. Together with the United States we defend our shared continent, including through NORAD. These partnerships have been the foundation of Canadian defence and security for decades and continue to be our greatest strategic advantage and priority*

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ing through NORAD, the world's only binational military command. These partnerships have been the foundation of Canadian defence and security for decades and continue to be our greatest strategic advantage and priority.

### **... IN THE EURO-ATLANTIC REGION**

European security is inextricably linked to Canada's continued security and economic well-being. Europe is our second-largest trading partner, and home to many of our closest allies. The Euro-Atlantic defence relationship, institutionalized in NATO, has made an enduring contribution to peace and prosperity in Europe and stability around the world.

This is why Canada maintains an enduring commitment to our European allies and partners. As the framework nation of NATO's Forward Land Forces in Latvia, Canada leads a multinational force where up to 2200 Canadian Armed Forces members will be deployed by 2026 in Canada's largest foreign military deployment. Canada has also established a bilateral security arrangement with Ukraine and will continue our extensive military assistance under Operation UNIFIER, which has already trained over 40,000 Ukrainian troops. Our NATO Alliance and European security will remain at the core of our approach to national defence.

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***Our allies and partners in Europe are facing serious security threats—the most dire situation in decades. Russia's illegal and unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine must fail if we wish to preserve the international order that has safeguarded Canada's security and prosperity for decades***

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Our allies and partners in Europe are facing serious security threats—the most dire situation in decades. On February 24, 2022, Russia launched its illegal and unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine, directly attacking the international order that keeps all nations safe. Russia's ongoing war is a direct attack on democracy, freedom, human rights, and Ukraine's sovereign right to choose its own future. The stakes could not be higher—Russia's invasion must fail if we wish to preserve the international order that has safeguarded Canada's security and prosperity for decades.

Russia's aggressive attempts to assert its strategic dominance—from its invasion of Ukraine to cyber intrusions, global disinformation campaigns and its funding of armed groups around the world—confirms its disregard for the basic sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity of other nations, human rights, and international







law. Russia is targeting civilians using methods that include conflict-related sexual violence, unlawful killing, and torture. Despite battlefield losses in Ukraine, Russia remains highly capable of projecting air, naval and missile forces across Europe, as well as to and through the Arctic to threaten North America. Russia will remain a challenge for generations; it seeks strategic borders that extend well beyond its legal and geographical ones, possesses resilient and robust advanced military capabilities, and is rebuilding its arsenals.

Russia is also deepening its partnerships with China, North Korea and Iran in troubling ways, even conducting joint naval exercises and air patrols with China in the northern and western Pacific. Although these countries pursue different goals at different scales, they share a broader disregard for the stable and predictable rules that have governed our international relations—sovereignty, non-intervention, basic principles of human security, and free and open trade. Through their actions, they normalize the use of violence, coercion and intimidation to achieve their political ambitions. These efforts and the increasing cooperation among them allow them to share military technologies and resources and direct them at democratic states.

Russia's capabilities and its willingness to use them threaten both Europe and North America. Its offensive cyber, space, information operations, and conventional and nuclear missiles challenge NATO's eastern boundaries as well as the Alliance's northern and western flanks. The new geography of the Russian threat undermines our capacity to assist allies in Europe from a position of strength.

NATO members are responding and upholding their commitment to collective defence and deterrence. The Alliance is undergoing its largest reinforcement in a generation. It is building deeper and more robust defences on all of its borders, requiring all allies—including Canada—to increase their capabilities and defence investments. Our defence of the Arctic will be more essential than ever.

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*As a Pacific nation, the security and stability of the broader Indo-Pacific region is vital to Canada's future. It is the world's fastest growing region and home to six of Canada's top 13 trading partners*

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### **... AND THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION**

As a Pacific nation, the security and stability of the broader Indo-Pacific region is vital to Canada's future. It is the world's fastest growing region and home to six of Canada's top 13 trading partners. As outlined in our Indo-Pacific Strategy, Canada recognizes the impact that Indo-Pacific security will have on our future prosperity and stability. That is why the our Government took action to increase Canada's military presence and partnerships in the region. Canada did this to advance our interests, including the protection of democracy, international law and human rights. This supports Canada's enduring objectives of mitigating coercive behaviour, advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and contributing to regional stability.

China is an increasingly capable and assertive global actor looking to reshape the international system to advance its interests and values, which increasingly diverge from our own on matters of defence and security. It is seeking to establish exclusive control of international waterways and airspace in the region, openly aspires to unify with Taiwan, by force if necessary, and is using force or coercion to incrementally expand its influence from the East and South China Seas to the Himalayas.

China is currently pursuing the most ambitious military build-up of any nation since the Second World War, focusing on high-tech systems that generate advantages against Allied forces and reduce freedom of movement in the Indo-Pacific. China has prioritized the development of nuclear, space, counter-space, cyber, artificial intelligence, polar, naval and submarine capabilities. It has built up its navy to shape the maritime environment, including coercing Canada and its allies when we are exercising our international navigational rights in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait or implementing UN Security Council resolutions.

Canada will always defend its national interests, and that includes defending the global rules that govern trade, navigation and overflight, nuclear non-proliferation and human rights. We will manage our defence relationship with China purposefully. Frank, open, and respectful dialogue is important and helps to ensure clarity about Canada's national positions. Instability in the Taiwan Strait, a vital waterway, would disrupt Canadian trade, including in critical advanced technologies, and could cost trillions of dollars to the global economy. China's actions in recent years confirm the need for Canadian resolve to uphold these principles, alongside our allies and partners.

Recent actions by the nuclear-armed Democratic People's Republic of Korea add to instability in the Indo-Pacific. Pyongyang has broken with seven decades of policy and officially abandoned a peaceful path to the reunification of the two Koreas. Kim Jong Un's government has declared the South as its "principal enemy," and increased its hostile rhetoric and activities. It has also pursued a new strategic partnership with Russia, helping that country circumvent international sanctions in exchange for military support in its illegal and unjustified war in Ukraine.

## **INSTABILITY AROUND THE WORLD**

Smaller but increasingly capable states are threatening their regions through aggressive military and paramilitary activities, and non-state actors are actively threatening Canada and the international order in both the physical and digital worlds by exploiting new capabilities and technologies. Increasing state fragility is further undermining global stability, and the use of conflict-related sexual violence as a tactic of war is pervasive.

In the Middle East, Iran menaces its neighbours with threats and use of military force, disrupts regional maritime trade and commercial energy infrastructure, and leverages Iranian-aligned non-state actors and terrorist groups across the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Yemen to further destabilize the region. Since 2018, it has also steadily advanced its nuclear program while limiting access to conceal this progress. Iran continues to disregard well-established rules governing sovereignty, non-proliferation, and non-intervention as well as the basic principles of human rights by exploiting conflict, social grievances and other upheavals.

Hostile non-state actors in the Middle East and elsewhere exacerbate global instability and remind us that terrorist and insurgent groups can hold countries at risk from far away—by threatening international waterways, commercial and financial centres or critical infrastructure. These non-state actors are also often supported by states seeking to amplify shared or complementary objectives.

Our growing reliance on cyberspace, cloud computing, and interconnected technologies for daily life and economic growth greatly complicates the defence of Canada and Canadian interests. Cyberspace is also crucial for our military operations. Cyber-attacks by malicious actors are of particular concern as they can exploit potential vulnerabilities and impact our ability to command our forces, understand the battle space, and employ advanced weapon systems. The emergence of new technical capabilities and the decentralized nature of online threats make it difficult to identify and respond to malicious cyber activity.

We are also seeing a general increase in state fragility. Persistent governance challenges and breakdowns in law and order lead to national crises

that carry high human costs and increase demands on our military to assist people in need. Canadian responses to crises in Sudan and Haiti are the latest reminders of the need to advance shared international goals for support to democracy, sustainable development and lasting security. Canada's enduring commitment to United Nations peace operations and working in partnership with regional organizations like the African Union reflects the fundamental importance of multilateral efforts to preserve international peace and security.

Transnational challenges are major contributors to growing state fragility. Climate change, terrorism and extremism, and transnational organized crime exacerbate security challenges for societies in fragile regions that can ill afford them, including competition for scarce resources, such as fish, fresh water, critical minerals, energy sources, large-scale human displacement, mass migration and regional tensions. Moreover, the intersection of climate change, gender inequality, and conflict creates opportunities for terrorist groups to increase recruitment, while migration resulting from climate change results in increased risks of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. These challenges will further destabilize the global order,



affect our national interests abroad, and increase the frequency and urgency of calls for international military assistance, including from Canada. Canada will continue to support capacity development for states facing these and other challenges, consistent with our role as a global security provider and contributor to peace and stability within, as well as among states.

By virtue of our diverse population, extensive global presence and commercial ties, Canada is

directly affected by these developments and we must have the tools required to respond. Canada's interests are advanced by an international order that is free, open, stable and governed by the rule of law, and we have a responsibility to Canadians and our like-minded partners and allies to play an integral role in maintaining global stability.

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## THE CHANGING CHARACTER OF CONFLICT

While strategic competition and climate change shape our security environment, technological developments have sped up the impact of these shifts. Artificial intelligence, quantum computing, synthetic biology, data analytics, autonomous systems, robotics and advanced cyber and space technologies are frontier technologies whose military and non-military uses create new vulnerabilities and complicate our national security interests.

- AI will fundamentally transform conventional military warfare and competition below the threshold of conflict. In the near future, readily available AI tools will enhance the cyber capabilities of both state and non-state actors, allowing them to target and automate, at scale, disinformation and influence campaigns, malicious cyber operations, espionage, and foreign interference activities. Racial and gender biases amplified through AI can deepen inequities. AI will enhance national cyber capabilities, including for deception, disinformation and misinformation. It will accelerate decision-making, enable improved awareness and target recognition, and control a range of autonomous systems.
- Quantum technology will change how militaries operate given the data-intensive nature of modern military systems, and will pose a serious threat to the security of data, encryption, and the internet itself.



- Cyberspace is an increasingly interconnected and complex ecosystem, which enables greater capacity and prosperity while also creating new areas of vulnerability due to advances in AI, quantum and automation technologies.
- Space is an integral domain that underpins the satellites, cell phones and communications infrastructure that Canadians use daily, as well as the military-technological advantage that Canada and its allies and partners rely on for our defence. Adversaries have developed counter-space weapons designed to undermine that advantage and threaten the connectivity that enables our economy and way of life.
- Technological advances have increased the threat posed to Canada by missiles. Hypersonic technology enables missiles to move at faster speeds than ever before and in unpredictable patterns, making them much harder to detect and intercept. Along with cruise and ballistic missiles, hypersonic missiles threaten to overwhelm our existing air defence systems and impose new constraints on our ability to support allies and partners around the world.
- Small drones are now being manufactured at high volume and low cost, and are changing warfare from Ukraine to the Red Sea. They are used for reconnaissance and striking targets; in some instances drones that cost just a few hundred dollars have destroyed multi-million dollar platforms. Canada must be prepared to counter these threats as well as deploy robust drone capabilities.

Advanced technologies are also being combined with traditional military equipment to change how wars are fought, as the conflict in Ukraine has made clear. It has confirmed the need for large forces and combat power, well-supplied by standing inventories of ammunition and spare parts, backed by a

strong industrial base to re-arm over time. At the same time, it has also highlighted the precision strike revolution, persistent sensor technologies, surveillance and strikes using drones, long-range strike weapons, and the need for a seamless digital platform to rapidly connect these capabilities.

Technology also enables “hybrid” or “grey zone” attacks in the cyber and information domains, intellectual property theft, privacy breaches, and the use of civilian companies or research institutions to advance military goals. Adversaries exploit these vulnerabilities to weaken our defence industrial base, compromise our industrial supply chains and interfere with our sovereign decision-making processes.

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***Detering conflict relies on our ability to maintain and protect our advantage in innovation and advanced technologies. Canada and its allies have long held this advantage, and our ability to integrate new technologies into military capabilities faster than our adversaries will be the difference in maintaining this advantage and deterring future conflict***

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Detering conflict relies on our ability to maintain and protect our advantage in innovation and advanced technologies. Canada and its allies have long held this advantage, and our ability to integrate new technologies into military capabilities faster than our adversaries will be the difference in maintaining this advantage and deterring future conflict. China in particular is speeding up its adoption of current and emerging defence and security technologies, in some cases to the detriment of Canada’s economic and military security. Keeping pace with technological change will protect Canada from international threats and ensure our interoperability with the allies and partners with whom we work to protect our collective interests.

## II. OUR VISION FOR DEFENCE

The implications of our rapidly changing security environment make clear that we need to adjust our approach to defence. At its core, *Our North, Strong and Free* seeks to achieve two fundamental things: strengthen the foundations of our military and deter and defeat new and accelerating threats with new capabilities.

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*That is why, consistent with our NATO commitments, Canada is making significant investments in defence. The government is projecting our defence spending to GDP ratio to reach 1.76% in 2029-30*

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That is why, consistent with our NATO commitments, Canada is making significant investments in defence. The government is projecting our defence spending to GDP ratio to reach 1.76% in 2029-30, and exceed the target of 20% of defence expenditures on the acquisition of military equipment. To continue working towards our NATO commitments, this defence policy also lays the foundation for future growth in the Canadian Armed Forces, including through a more regular cycle of review.

Every country's contribution to deterring aggression is shaped by its geography, threat environment and security objectives. Canada's approach is defined by our position as an Atlantic and Pacific nation that shares a continent with the United States. To deter any attack on Canada and conflict more broadly, Canada will develop and maintain ready, resilient, and relevant military forces and signal our commitment to our interests and values through a willingness to use force when needed. We will maintain our ability to assist our allies and partners from a position of strength.

Our renewed vision is focused on preparing the military to meet these accelerating challenges, prioritizing those that most directly impact Canadians and Canada. It reaffirms that our insurance against instability and geopolitical uncertainty is a ready, resilient and relevant Canadian Armed Forces capable of defending Canada at home, ensuring security in North America, and contributing to an international order that is free and open, inclusive, stable, and governed by the rule of law.

Canada's approach to deterring conflict is directly supported by the adjustments and investments laid out in this defence policy. It is informed by deliberate policy choices about the capabilities our military needs, and where and how Canada should focus its defence efforts. These objectives and adjustments are laid out below.

### ASSERTING CANADIAN SOVEREIGNTY

The top priority of the Canadian Armed Forces is the defence of Canada and Canadians.

We will be guided by the overall objective of ensuring our military has the people, equipment, training and infrastructure needed to detect, deter and defeat threats in, over and approaching Canada—in the air, on land, on and under the sea, and in space and cyberspace.

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*The top priority of the Canadian Armed Forces is the defence of Canada and Canadians*

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We must place particular focus on defending the Arctic and North and its approaches against new and accelerating threats through credible deterrence. We will secure our Arctic and North by increasing the presence, reach, mobility and responsiveness of the Canadian Armed Forces in the region, and along our coasts and maritime approaches. We will also develop greater striking power to deter adversaries and keep threats farther from our shores.





In delivering on this vision, we will collaborate with Indigenous partners and northern communities to safeguard our security and assert our sovereignty. Our investments in Arctic defence present enormous opportunities for the region. To help realize these opportunities, we are committed to doing things differently—to an inclusive approach to national defence that recognizes that there is nothing to defend if we do not put our people first. We will deepen our dialogue with northern and Arctic stakeholders, including to establish multi-purpose northern infrastructure that can support Canadian Armed Forces operations and contribute towards the needs of territorial governments, Indigenous peoples, and Northern communities wherever possible, consistent with the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework. In doing so, we will rely on Indigenous expertise, experience and talent across the region.

As climate change accelerates, the Canadian Armed Forces is being called on with increasing frequency to assist in domestic emergencies, including disaster response and search and rescue operations. Our military must be able to respond when needed, as a force of last resort and while maintaining its ability to defend Canada and North America, support our allies and partners, and contribute to peace and stability abroad. The capabilities outlined in *Our North, Strong and Free* will maintain and enhance the Canadian Armed Forces' ability to respond to a range of domestic emergencies.

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***We will improve defence procurement to rapidly identify and acquire the military capabilities needed to maintain operational advantage and build a strong defence industrial base to help meet Canadian defence and security needs***

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To realize this vision, Canada will harness innovation in hypersonic and cruise missile defence, undersea surveillance, space domain awareness, Arctic operations, and other areas. We will strive to adapt to rapid technological change faster than our adversaries and as fast as our allies. We will improve defence procurement to rapidly identify and acquire the military capabilities needed to maintain operational advantage and build a strong defence industrial base to help meet Canadian defence and security needs through reliable, high-quality production at a scale necessary to meet the security needs of Canada and our allies.

## **DEFENDING NORTH AMERICA**

Prioritizing the defence of Canada also contributes to deterring and defeating threats to the continent that we share with the United States, our closest ally.

Canada has made historic investments to reinforce the defence of North America. In 2022, we announced the largest investment in NORAD in a generation, which amounted to \$38.6 billion over 20 years. This upgrades our NORAD capabilities and our ability to respond to any threats posed by the increased accessibility of our shared continent due to changes related to global warming, shifting geopolitics and new military technologies used by our adversaries. Our modernization of NORAD is a clear demonstration of our strength in defending North America in cooperation with the United States.

Key NORAD investments will enhance the detection of activities in our air and maritime approaches, including with new Arctic and Polar Over-the-Horizon-Radar systems. To prepare to respond to faster, harder-to-detect incursions, we are increasing the speed of our operational decision-making, leveraging advances in cloud-based

computing, artificial intelligence and machine learning, and increasing the range of our aircraft with new air-to-air refuelers and an expanded fighter jet presence in the North. We are modernizing and increasing stocks of short- and medium-range air-to-air missiles and acquiring a new long-range air-to-air missile capability for our fighter jets. We are also investing in the development of new capabilities that give us a military advantage on our continent, including hypersonic and cruise missile defence, undersea surveillance, artificial intelligence, advanced cyber and space-based capabilities, space domain awareness, quantum technologies, and Arctic operations.

More work is needed to defend Canada and Canadians against growing air and missile threats. Modern missiles move faster and in more unpredictable patterns, making them much harder to detect and intercept. These new missiles threaten to overwhelm our existing air defence systems and impose new challenges on our ability to support allies and partners around the world. This requires Canada to invest in integrated air and missile defence capabilities alongside NATO allies to continue to protect Canadians at home and abroad.

Deepening Canadian and North American security will also have a global impact. A more secure North America shores up NATO's western and northern flanks, and strengthens the Alliance's deterrence and defence posture. A secure North America creates strategic dilemmas for adversaries, and enables Canada to reinforce allies in crisis or conflict.

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***The Canadian Armed Forces will continue to make valuable contributions to global efforts to deter major power conflict, confront terrorism and insurgency, and address instability***

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## **ADVANCING CANADA'S GLOBAL INTERESTS AND VALUES**

The international order that underpins Canada's security and prosperity is endangered by the forces of competition and instability. To help safeguard Canada, the Canadian Armed Forces will continue to make valuable contributions to global efforts to deter major power conflict, confront terrorism and insurgency, and address instability.

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***We will provide members who serve overseas with modern and lethal tools so that they are well protected and can fulfill Canada's global security responsibilities***

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Protecting Canada's interests and values requires preparing and equipping our military to deploy and sustain forces across a broad spectrum of military activities, from war-fighting to peace operations to capacity-building. We will provide members who serve overseas with modern and lethal tools so that they are well protected and can fulfill Canada's global security responsibilities.

As a priority, Canada will meet our NATO defence commitments as they evolve in response to shifts in the global security landscape. We will continue playing an important role confronting Russian aggression through a steadfast commitment to NATO assurance and deterrence measures. Standing with our allies provides the best guarantee of our security and continued prosperity at home. Together with the United States we will defend NATO's western flank, and with our Arctic allies we will defend NATO's northern regions.

Our support to Euro-Atlantic security also includes Canada's role as the framework nation lead for NATO's Forward Land Forces in Latvia, the Canada-Ukraine Agreement on Security Cooperation and the \$13.3 billion that Canada has committed in multifaceted assistance to support Ukraine, including our extensive military assistance to Ukraine under Operation UNIFIER.

Canada also re-affirms our resolve in the Indo-Pacific. As outlined in our Indo-Pacific Strategy, Canada will contribute to stability in the region by maintaining a more persistent presence and helping support regional defence. Canada will continue working with allies and partners to support collective, coherent, and responsible actions in defence

of our interests in shared peace, stability and prosperity.

To help address growing global instability and advance Canada's foreign policy, the Canadian Armed Forces will also continue to make meaningful contributions around the world as part of coalition-based or multilateral initiatives in the Middle East, the Americas, and Africa. These contributions will advance our interests and values, safeguarding both commercial ties, people-to-people connections and like-minded relationships whenever they are threatened by crisis.

We will also continue supporting like-minded partners through capacity-building efforts, helping them to address internal challenges and build institutional strength, resolve regional disputes, or deter threats to a free and open, inclusive and stable international order based on the rule of law. To address the persistent risk of local crises, the Canadian Armed Forces will have the equipment needed to respond to requests for assistance to Canadians abroad, as required.

Canada will remain committed to its role in peace support operations in support of the United Nations and other multilateral organizations. In parallel, the Department of National Defence will continue to broaden and deepen its commitments to advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda in partnership with Global Affairs Canada and other federal partners of *Foundations for Peace: Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security*. Canada

recognizes gender inequality as a root cause of conflict and that crisis and conflict exacerbate existing inequalities. Through the integration of gender perspectives in military operations and institutions, the Canadian Armed Forces will advance gender equality, increase operational effectiveness, strengthen crisis response, and ensure that operations do not reinforce or exacerbate inequalities. The use of Gender-Based Analysis Plus as an analytical tool will continue to enable our military to deepen its understanding of insecurity and crisis, leading to the development of more refined plans and solutions to complex defence and security challenges.

The Canadian Armed Forces will also continue to promote the integration of human security considerations into planning, emphasizing the prevention of escalation in conflict zones, and collaborating with partners to address cross-cutting issues such as the protection of civilians and the impact of technology on security. Canada will deepen international cooperation on addressing the impacts of climate change on security and defence through its leadership of the NATO Climate Change and Security Centre of Excellence in Montreal.

## A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO NATIONAL SECURITY

Instability at home and abroad is increasing quickly. Canada will adapt its approach to security and defence to be prepared for these challenges. We will face unanticipated developments, with technological disruption and geopolitical shocks compli-





cating our ability to plan. Canada will therefore adapt faster and in a more integrated manner to ensure that we can advance our interests and remain secure and prosperous in years to come.

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***Canada will adapt faster and in a more integrated manner to ensure that we can advance our interests and remain secure and prosperous in the years to come***

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Going forward, Canada will publish a National Security Strategy every four years. This approach reflects the new reality of uncertainty and change, especially in the face of the quickly evolving nature of climate change. We will move away from undertaking significant policy reviews on an episodic and unpredictable basis, and move towards a more systematic approach that allows us to regularly assess the security environment and its implications for Canada, take stock of progress against our plans, and address the gaps in an integrated manner, leveraging the full range of national security tools at the government's disposal. This is how Canada will adapt to a rapidly evolving world in a responsive and responsible way.

As a core pillar of national security, the Department will undertake strategic policy reviews in the same four-year cycle, contributing to an integrated update of Canada's security, intelligence, defence, and diplomatic posture. We will engage Canadians from coast to coast to coast as part of this process.

This four-year defence policy review cycle will allow Canada to adjust to changing realities and ensure the Canadian Armed Forces can continue delivering on its objectives. It will provide an opportunity to regularly assess progress in implementing this defence policy, adjusting the plan as required, and making further decisions around capabilities and funding as needed. Combined with a more agile defence procurement system and a stronger defence industrial base, the review cycle will also better enable the deliberate, phased approach to adapting our military and its capabilities. It will also provide clarity and transparency to our partners in defence: Canadians, our allies, and our defence industry.

Ultimately, this deliberate approach will lay the foundations for sustainable, long-term success and continued adjustment in our defence capabilities.



# III. DELIVERING ON THIS VISION: STRENGTHENING THE FOUNDATIONS



Canada is committed to building a stronger Canadian Armed Forces, equipped to deliver increased security for Canadians. Our investments will enable the military to adapt in a sustainable, responsible manner, guided by our evolving national security needs in a more dangerous world.

The initiatives laid out in this defence policy can only succeed if the institutional building blocks of our military's operational effectiveness are sound. Strengthening these building blocks is the necessary first steps towards our vision.

## STRENGTHENING OUR FOUNDATIONS

The Canadian Armed Forces' ability to conduct operations depends on a strong institution that can procure equipment with agility, manage personnel using modern, digital systems, and recruit and retain talented people from across Canada.

Generating and deploying military capabilities requires people, equipment, training sustainment and infrastructure. We have made steady progress in these areas through critical investments under *Strong, Secure, Engaged* but more work is needed to address longstanding shortfalls, especially as Canada faces increased global demands. In the years since the release of the 2017 defence policy, the pandemic, a higher tempo of operations, infla-

tion, supply chain pressures and revelations of misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces have exacerbated these pressures.

We will place particular focus on addressing recruitment, retention and personnel management, as well as quality of life for military members, including health and family supports such as child-care and housing. We will also address other foundational requirements—maintenance and repair of equipment and infrastructure, ammunition, digitalization and internal services. Lastly, the Department of National Defence will focus on improving our ability to deliver, with more people to plan, procure and manage capabilities, reform our defence procurement system, and fix outdated processes and systems that are analog, cumbersome and inflexible.

The goal is to have the foundations in place to ensure that our military can continue to grow, establish new capabilities to meet new threats, and deploy ready, resilient and relevant forces to meet today's and future challenges.

## SUPPORTING OUR PEOPLE

Every day, Canadian Armed Forces members don the uniform and stand ready to protect and defend the people and the values of Canada. Their bravery and sacrifice allow millions of people, at home and abroad, to live in peace and security. That's why our people remain at the core of everything the Canadian Armed Forces does.



## CULTURE CHANGE

Our first priority must be our people and their well-being. We will be relentless in our ongoing commitment to address all forms of misconduct and unprofessional behaviour in our organization.

To build a more inclusive and supportive force, Defence is pursuing legislative changes to the *National Defence Act*, and implementing 206 external recommendations received from four external reports:

- **Independent External Comprehensive Review:** This review represents the most comprehensive examination of National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces culture and contains a roadmap to meaningfully address sexual misconduct.
- **Third Independent Review of the National Defence Act:** This legally mandated review contains recommendations to modernize the military justice and grievance systems.
- **Minister of National Defence Advisory Panel on Systemic Racism and Discrimination:** This report is strongly aligned with Government of Canada priorities and mandate letter commitments.
- **National Apology Advisory Committee Report:** This report highlights the acknowledgment of wrongdoing and the historic apology being key to healing, reconciliation, and lasting change.

With our goals clearly in view, we will build on our positive momentum. In the past two years, Defence has published a new Canadian Armed Forces ethos, *Trusted to Serve*, which sets out modern principles, values and standards for the conduct of all members, and has introduced character-based leadership assessment in the selection of General Officers and Flag Officers. Defence has also established a Declaration of Victims' Rights and a Victims' Liaison Officer program to help victims navigate the military justice system, and is taking a trauma-informed approach to workplace reintegration for respondents, setting up an expanded Restorative Services program, and improving the quality and delivery of training and educa-

tion at all levels.

Defence has also delivered new programs and new tools, such as the Defence Team Positive Space Program and the anti-racism toolkit. We have expanded the existing Sexual Misconduct Support and Resource Centre to enable it to support Cadets and Junior Canadian Rangers aged 16 and older as well as their families.

This work is complemented by the introduction of Bill C-66, *An Act to amend the National Defence Act and other Acts*, which will lay the foundation for an improved military culture by modernizing the military justice system, improving support to victims and, among other things, providing exclusive jurisdiction to civilian authorities to both investigate and prosecute *Criminal Code* sexual offences committed in Canada.

We have appointed an External Monitor to help sustain this momentum by assessing and publicly reporting on our progress on the Independent External Comprehensive Review.

## RECRUITMENT

A career with the Canadian Armed Forces is a source of unique pride and confidence among those who have the privilege to serve. Defence will seek to inspire a wider audience of prospective members to consider the opportunity of a life in service to Canada.

The current gap between the Canadian Armed Forces' actual force size and our authorized force size is unsustainable and needs to be filled rapidly. Going forward, we will change our approach to recruitment by taking new and innovative measures on an urgent basis to fill this gap.

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*The Canadian Armed Forces is also modernizing training by optimizing new members' transition into service, streamlining training activities, and providing new recruits with meaningful work more quickly and effectively*

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Defence will **modernize its recruitment processes** to rebuild the military by 2032. Current efforts are focused on using digital technology to improve the applicant experience, speeding up required screenings, and connecting with new



pools of applicants. The Canadian Armed Forces is also modernizing training by optimizing new members' transition into service, streamlining training activities, and providing new recruits with meaningful work more quickly and effectively.

We are taking new, fresh approaches to recruit and retain more military members. We are evolving dress requirements to foster greater inclusiveness. The Royal Canadian Navy has launched innovative one-year trial programs to attract recruits without requiring a long-term commitment and streamline the intake period for a prospective sailor from months to weeks. We are exploring ways to recruit experienced candidates in high-demand technical professions at a level that reflects their work experience and skills. Recruiting centres and training schools are being staffed on a priority basis to increase the military's capacity to connect directly with prospective members and new recruits.

The Canadian Armed Forces will **create a probationary period to enable the faster enrolment of applicants**. We will **streamline the security clearance process** to reduce the time it takes for new recruits to move into their positions. In addition, we will take new steps to **re-evaluate medical requirements**, and abolish outdated processes and criteria wherever possible to support efforts to urgently fill our personnel gap while also diversifying our forces. We also recognize the need to meet more Canadians in large population centres, and that we cannot rely on recruitment exclusively from rural areas, which are historically well-represented. The Canadian Armed Forces will ensure that our recruitment efforts are tailored towards recruiting talented people from all parts of our society. In this, we will also remove barriers to the recruitment of

diverse Canadians.

## RETENTION

Shortfalls in recruitment reinforce the need to retain current military members. Despite important improvements, the underlying personnel system still requires structural reforms to reflect today's realities, including changes to military personnel policy, human resources renewal, and identifying new approaches to position the military as an employer of choice.

To retain existing members and attract new ones, Defence will **reform how we manage military personnel**, granting members increased career control and flexibility while enhancing performance management and succession planning. As we continue to remove barriers to deployment, retention, and career progression for diverse women in the military, we will also explore ways to improve career support for military members through upgraded administrative processes and improved service delivery that is enabled by digi-



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*We will establish a Canadian Armed Forces Housing Strategy, rehabilitate existing housing and build new housing*

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tal tools. We will provide them with the modern equipment, training and infrastructure required to succeed in their missions.

The Department will also examine **adjustments to personnel policies** related to compensation and benefits, human resources policies, leave, and other supports for work-life balance for those in uniform. Our current framework was put in place decades ago and does not address the expectations and realities of today's members.

We will establish a **Canadian Armed Forces Housing Strategy, rehabilitate existing housing and build new housing** so that our military members can afford to live where they and their families are posted. We have already taken bold action to improve access to housing for all Canadians, and will do the same for the members of the Canadian Armed Forces and their families.

We will **accelerate the development of an electronic health record platform** that improves the continuity of care in mental and physical health services for the diverse needs of members as they move between provinces and territories.

Finally, we will invest in additional supports for military families, including by **investing in affordable childcare**. Military service often demands frequent moves and deployments, making quality childcare more than just a convenience. To support our military families, Canada will provide our members with better access to childcare at Canadian Armed Forces bases across the country. This is an essential support to members' ability to serve and the well-being of their families.

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*To support our military families, Canada will provide our members with better access to childcare at Canadian Armed Forces bases across the country*

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These investments will ensure the Canadian Armed Forces recognizes and rewards military members and their families for the sacrifices that they make in the service of Canadians, which will

in turn lead to a more diverse, efficient and operationally effective military.

### **STRENGTHENING THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES ...**

Canada needs a modern military to employ the capabilities required to take on new threats and deliver on the military's core roles. Through 2032, the Canadian Armed Forces will focus on building back to its authorized force size of 71,500 Regular Force and 30,000 Primary Reserve Force members, and lay the foundations for future growth. This effort will enable the military to manage modern capabilities at the speed and scale that is required.

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*Canada will provide its military with the right people, in the right numbers, to enable our members to succeed in the missions that Canada asks of them*

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A stronger military will be able to deploy in greater numbers for sustained periods to meet the growing demands for military support in Canada and around the world. For every member deployed on an operation in Canada or abroad, another member is on high-readiness training preparing to relieve a colleague, and another member is returning from operations, adjusting to the transition and preparing to support others. This three-to-one deployment rotation is, in turn, supported by a robust structure of civilian and military specialists that enable every operation, such as logistics officers, intelligence and IT specialists, military police, legal advisors, trainers, health services, HR, finance, and other forms of administrative support. Canada will provide its military with the right people, in the right numbers, to enable our members to succeed in the missions that Canada asks of them.

### **... AND CIVILIAN CAPACITY**

Defence will increase the number of civilian specialists employed in priority areas that are essential to the future growth and development of the Canadian Armed Forces. **A larger civilian workforce** will increase our capacity to recruit and train new

soldiers, service our capabilities, purchase new equipment, increase our stocks of ammunition, accelerate digital transformation and upgrade infrastructure. They will also fill critical gaps in functions that are essential to carrying out our operations today and into the future, such as staffing, security screening, and information technology.

### **SPEEDING ACQUISITION AND ADVANCING DEFENCE PROCUREMENT REFORM**

Defence procurement takes too long in Canada and needs to be faster and more effective. We will think differently about how we procure equipment, how to better maintain and upgrade it over time, and how to ensure it is optimized to meet the diverse needs of our members. We will also compress the timeline of major acquisitions, to reduce the operational and financial risks of delays and gaps between capabilities being retired and new ones being added.

Public Services and Procurement Canada, National Defence, Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada, and the Treasury Board Secretariat have launched **a review of our defence procurement system**. This includes examining internal processes used by Defence to define requirements and approve projects, and looking at the broader set of rules, regulations and policies that govern military procurement. This effort will clarify mechanisms to facilitate the timely delivery of military equipment, enable increased use of government-to-government arrangements where it makes sense to develop strategic partnerships, and look at how best to leverage existing programs to strategically invest in the domestic capacity needed by the military.

We will think differently about how we procure with our allies. Like Canada, they are rethinking how to speed up the acquisition of capabilities to meet quickly evolving threats. They are also supporting defence industrial initiatives and strategies to build resilient supply chains, incentivize private industry to scale up or open new production lines, secure sources of supply, and roll out domestic workforce and acquisition strategies that invigorate their economies.

Canada will pursue increased economic opportunities as part of newly forming defence trade arrangements among trusted partners. Our privileged access to allied defence, research and inno-

vation sectors supports good jobs and economic growth for Canadians. For example, thanks to our trusted status, every one of the more than 3000 F-35 fighter jets sold by the United States to its partners around the world will contain parts made in Canada by Canadian workers. By leveraging our world-leading capacity for invention and innovation, Canada will pursue collaborative development of new weapons and systems that will support interoperability, and ultimately strengthen our collective defence.

We have a global reputation as a hub for innovative research and the development of cutting-edge capabilities vital to the future of military operations. This will be boosted with NATO's Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic, which is establishing a North American Regional Office in Halifax. We will capitalize on our strengths and develop new ones, including in areas such as avionics, satellite technologies, sensors, computing, command and control, secure communications, and munitions. The integration of emerging technologies, including AI, will be informed by GBA Plus considerations. Government investment in these areas will help keep our technology at the leading edge and position our industry as a strategic resource to our international partners.

### **BUILDING AN INNOVATIVE AND EFFECTIVE DEFENCE INDUSTRIAL BASE**

The majority of defence investments are spent right here at home—on thousands of jobs and in hundreds of communities from coast to coast to coast. In addition to the 130,000 Canadians employed by Defence, the Canadian defence industry contributed close to \$12.6 billion in GDP and 78,000 jobs across Canada's economy in 2023. Investments in defence are investments in Canada's national strength and in advanced technology.

We will change our approach to working with industry, innovators, and researchers—moving away from transactional approaches for acquiring capabilities to sustained strategic partnerships founded on transparency and trust. This means more regular engagement and, through regular four-year reviews, greater transparency and certainty about our plans for future investments. Through long-term partnerships, Defence can pursue an expanded set of goals in defence procurement, including the rapid onboarding of new technolo-



gies, and deeper integration with allied supply chains and innovation networks, securing a reliable supply from Canadian industry.

Building up Canada's defence capabilities must also include building up our defence industrial base. Recent events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have demonstrated the importance of reliable defence supply chains. When we need ammunition or equipment, we need it urgently, and we cannot count on private capital to deliver the surge capacity that is required. Limited government support can bridge the gap to ensure that domestic capacity is available when we need it most.

To support Canadian industry to meet the ammunition demands of Canada and our closest allies, Canada will seek to accelerate the **establishment of new artillery ammunition production capacity** in Canada, creating skilled jobs for Canadian workers for the long term and generating economic benefits for Canadian communities. It will increase the Canadian Armed Forces' resilience by establishing a reliable Canadian supply of NATO-standard ammunition at a time of unprecedented need and limited global production capacity.

To capitalize on our industrial investments, the Canadian Armed Forces will **establish a greater strategic reserve of battle-decisive munitions**. Canada needs adequate stockpiles of munitions to meet its defence and security commitments during a crisis or conflict, and industry needs clarity from government about future acquisitions to set up production lines. *Our North, Strong and Free* will provide both. At a time when these munitions are becoming more difficult to procure abroad, a

strategic reserve will ensure our military can sustain itself in longer, more dangerous operations, and enable sufficient ongoing training. As part of this effort, Defence will work with Canadian suppliers and allies to strengthen Canada's ability to ensure that appropriate stocks are available to sustain Canada's commitments to NORAD and NATO regardless of global capacity constraints.

To accelerate the integration of new technologies into our vehicles, vessels, aircraft and other equipment, Defence will **pilot a Continuous Capability Sustainment approach to upgrading equipment**. While the traditional approach is to wait years to do minor upgrades to major equipment to align them with major mid-life overhauls, a continuous approach will give Defence the flexibility to rapidly integrate the latest technology and innovations in more regular, incremental maintenance cycles.

We will ensure a reliable supply of defence materiel, free from disruption or interference through a **Defence Supply Chain Resilience Strategy**. Defence will work with federal partners to develop solutions to mitigate risks throughout the supply chain, from critical commodities and intellectual property to manufacturing and delivery.

Canada will participate in the newly established **NATO Innovation Fund**, which will offer additional funding streams for innovative Canadian entrepreneurs. The Fund is the world's first defence-focused multi-sovereign venture capital fund, providing investment in start-up firms developing dual-use, emerging and disruptive technologies critical to our defence. These include artificial intelligence, big-data processing, quantum-enabled tech-

nologies, autonomy, biotechnology and human enhancement, novel materials, energy, propulsion, and space capability.

Canada actively collaborates with the Five Eyes partners—Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States—on undersea, advanced cyber, quantum, artificial intelligence, hypersonic, and electronic warfare capabilities, and we are seeking to further this collaboration. These partners will continue to be among the most vital to Canada and its national security going forward. Through NORAD modernization and the investments laid out in this defence policy, Canada will continue to collaborate with these countries in the rapid development of these military capabilities.

Moreover, Canada’s research and development investments under our NORAD modernization plan correspond directly to the advanced capabilities sought by our allies. These initiatives, supported by defence procurement and industry partnership transformations, will ensure a defence innovation pipeline that is rapid and essential, and makes

valuable contributions to the Five Eyes defence partnership.

## **DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**

The speed of technological change requires a shift in organizational mindset—a willingness to embrace innovation and experimentation, and to continuously adopt emerging technologies.

The digitalization of defence is central to this objective. The Canadian Armed Forces is updating its tools and processes to better suit them to the modern world. We will make full use of our digital technologies by overhauling outdated and analog processes to improve our ability to hire people, conduct security screening, and share information in a timely way. This includes expanding the use of artificial intelligence-driven data management tools, as well as initiatives to advance big data management, acquire analytical tools, and expand cloud-based computing on open and secure networks.

These digital initiatives will build a data-driven organization capable of transforming data into actionable information that will allow for rapid decision-making and near real-time responses. It will also ensure the Canadian Armed Forces can remain interoperable with our most important allies and partners well into the future.



# IV. DELIVERING ON THIS VISION: THE RIGHT CAPABILITIES FOR CANADA

Ultimately, the mission of the Canadian Armed Forces is to defend Canada and advance the safety, security and prosperity of Canadians when and wherever required. The outcome of this defence policy will be a Canadian Armed Forces equipped with the tools to do the hard work that is required to defend Canada and Canadians.

Further investments in our military will enable the Canadian Armed Forces to respond to a rapidly changing climate and its impact on Canada's Arctic, brazen challenges to global stability, and accelerating technological innovation.

Responding to changes in the world around us, Canada will invest in the Canadian Armed Forces to:

- Ensure Canada has the force size and composition, design, equipment and infrastructure in the right place and the right time to contribute to a range of military operations, from humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to high-intensity conventional warfare;
- Protect and promote Canadian interests around the world, particularly in domestic and continental defence, the Arctic and North, the Euro-Atlantic region, and the Indo-Pacific region;
- Prepare to undertake operations at the size and speed required in a crisis, and to sustain these operations for their duration;
- Maintain Reserve Forces that provide depth at tactical, operational, and strategic levels; and
- Enhance leadership and operational effectiveness by being inclusive and reflecting Canada's unique, diverse, and multicultural society.





Following a detailed analysis of our military needs, Canada is choosing to invest in the right capabilities for our current and future needs. These capabilities are focused first and foremost on ensuring that Canada has the ability to protect its Arctic and North and assert our sovereignty. These capabilities will support the Canadian Armed Forces in defending Canada's coastline, detecting and defeating maritime and airborne threats, deterring threats to North America, and deploying military force into our Arctic more persistently. Ultimately, these investments underpin the protection of Canada's sovereignty in a more volatile, contested security environment.

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*Canada is choosing to invest in the right capabilities for our current and future needs. Ensuring that Canada has the ability to protect its Arctic and North and assert our sovereignty*

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## DEFENDING CANADA

The Canadian Armed Forces' most important role is defending Canada and Canadians.

Our military must be capable of undertaking a wide range of missions, including asserting Canadian sovereignty, conducting search and rescue, and assisting civil authorities when required. The Canadian Armed Forces also needs increased capacity to monitor our vast land mass, airspace and maritime areas, defend against threats to Canada as they arise, and be able to deploy quickly and efficiently across the country, especially in remote environments like our Arctic and North, or to assist Canadians facing wildfires, floods, or other climate-related disasters.

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*To address new threats through, to and in the Arctic and North, we will prioritize detecting and understanding threats across all military domains*

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To address new threats through, to and in the Arctic and North, we will prioritize detecting and understanding threats across all military domains, increasing our military's presence, mobility and responsiveness in the Arctic, and robustly responding to threats when and where they materialize. This will also help address challenges to the safety and security of Indigenous and northern communities.

We will make investments to ensure that Canada remains well-defended. Collectively, these capabilities will address our biggest challenges in the Arctic and North—they will provide a broader footprint and prepositioned supplies and equipment in the region, much better eyes and ears in space, in the air, on the ground and underwater, striking power to deter threats far from our shores, and the ability to get to and deal with incidents faster.

We will broaden our ability to monitor our approaches and detect and deter threats before they reach Canada, and to share that information securely with our allies.

We commit to vastly improving the Canadian Armed Forces' ability to surveil and control our underwater and maritime approaches. We will **explore options for renewing and expanding our submarine fleet** to enable the Royal Canadian Navy to project a persistent deterrent on all three coasts, with under-ice capable, conventionally powered submarines. Submarines allow Canada to covertly detect and deter maritime threats, control

our maritime approaches, and project power and striking capability further from our shores, at a time when Russian submarines are probing widely across the Atlantic, Arctic and Pacific Oceans and China is rapidly expanding its underwater fleet.

To track and evaluate underwater threats along all three coasts, we will **acquire specialized maritime sensors**. These sensors can be rapidly deployed on the *Harry DeWolf*-class Arctic and Offshore Patrol Vessels to conduct ocean surveillance. They will be used to monitor Canada's maritime approaches, including in the Arctic and North, and will be a critical component of the Canadian Armed Forces' ability to defend Canada from a growing range and sophistication of underwater threats including vessel-launched missiles, underwater systems, ships and submarines.

To enable the Canadian Armed Forces to deploy assets and transmit information from space-based intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance quickly and seamlessly, we will **build a new satellite ground station in the Arctic**. This ground station will improve our ability to detect, deter and respond to malign activities and to communicate those threats quickly with our most trusted partners.

We will expand our presence, with new capabilities for increased range, resilience and reach across large and remote areas.

To provide the Canadian Armed Forces with the speed and airlift capacity to assert Canada's sovereignty and respond to natural disasters and emergencies throughout the country, we will **acquire a more modern, mobile and effective tactical helicopter capability**. This capability may include a mix of crewed and uncrewed aircraft that will ensure Canada has modern aircraft to contribute to international operations with allies, including against threats from militaries with advanced capabilities.

We commit to improving the Canadian Armed Forces' mobility and presence on land in the Arctic and North. We will explore options to **acquire new vehicles adapted to ice, snow and tundra**. These versatile all-terrain vehicles will be able to operate effectively in all Arctic terrains and climate conditions. These vehicles will allow the military to maintain awareness in remote regions and along Canada's entire coastline, and better respond to unauthorized activity.



We commit to extending the Canadian Armed Forces' reach in Arctic waters. We will **explore options for enabling our Arctic and Offshore Patrol Vessels to embark and operate our maritime helicopters at sea**. This will increase the Canadian Armed Forces' ability to assert Canada's sovereignty in the Arctic and North, conduct surveillance, reconnaissance, and search and rescue, and be better prepared to respond to the growing range and sophistication of maritime threats.

To increase the Canadian Armed Forces' presence and responsiveness across the Arctic and the North, we will **establish northern operational support hubs**. These hubs, consisting of airstrips, logistics facilities and equipment and stockpiles of spare parts, will enable the military to better assert Canadian sovereignty by establishing a greater year-round military presence across the Arctic. They will increase military responsiveness and the ability to address challenges in remote northern regions on shorter notice and for longer periods, when required. These hubs will present significant opportunities to establish multi-purpose infrastructure that serve the Canadian Armed Forces, other federal partners, territorial governments, Indigenous partners, and northern communities, wherever possible. Throughout the design and implementation process we will engage Indigenous Peoples and northern communities, in line with the

principle of “nothing about us, without us” in the Arctic and Northern Policy Framework.

To support the required tempo of training, operations and day-to-day military activities, we will **invest in current and new Defence infrastructure from coast to coast to coast**. This involves ongoing asset maintenance and repair, and other improvements to military facilities, such as piers and runways. Defence’s assets will also be well-maintained, digitally equipped, and carbon neutral. Renewing our infrastructure will be crucial to supporting operational and organizational effectiveness and contributing to our military readiness and resilience to the effects of climate change.

We will maximize Canada’s effectiveness in cyberspace.

To improve the Canadian Armed Forces’ ability to conduct cyber operations, we will **establish a Canadian Armed Forces Cyber Command**. We will also stand up a joint Canadian cyber operations capability with the Communications Security Establishment, integrating the unique strengths of each organization into a unified team that will conduct active cyber operations in support of Canadian interests. This will enable the military to generate and employ cyber forces and other specialized capabilities on short notice and contribute to advancing Canadian interests and protecting Canadian, Allied and partner militaries at home and abroad. Canadian Armed Forces military cyber operations are approved by the Government on a mission-by-mission basis, in line with the use of all other military assets.

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*Canada will make additional investments explicitly designed to deter threats to the continent from adversaries*

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## DEFENDING NORTH AMERICA

While all of the above investments will also contribute directly to continental defence, Canada will make additional investments explicitly designed to deter threats to the continent from adversaries.

Canada will build on the \$38.6 billion NORAD modernization announcement in 2022 and make the following additional investments that will contribute to bolstering the security of North America. These capabilities will help restore deterrence in the North in cooperation with the United States and address requirements not addressed by NORAD modernization.

To detect and manage airborne threats, we will **acquire airborne early warning aircraft**. These aircraft detect aircraft and missiles at long ranges in real time and from much further away than ground-based radars, and then manage the battle space in response to a threat. They will vastly improve the Royal Canadian Air Force’s ability to detect, track and prioritize airborne threats sooner, respond faster, and better coordinate our response with the United States when required. They will allow Canada to continue making meaningful contributions to NORAD while also supporting allies and partners globally.





We commit to making **further contributions to the integrated air and missile defence of Canada and North America**. In light of the growing variety and sophistication of threats—from drones to advanced cruise missiles to hypersonic weapons—we will work to ensure our new airborne early warning and control aircraft and previously announced platforms such as the Canadian Surface Combatants can contribute to this capability as they come online. We will also **explore options for acquiring ground-based air defences to defend critical infrastructure** from a diverse array of incoming airborne attacks, including drones, missiles and artillery. This more robust approach to integrated air and missile defence could have significant benefits across all theatres in which Canada operates and strengthen our contribution to collective security.

We will **acquire long-range missile capabilities for the Canadian Army**. These missiles will be deployed to enable our forces to shoot at greater ranges than our adversaries in combat. We also commit to providing the Royal Canadian Navy and Royal Canadian Air Force with the striking power they need to deter threats at an appropriate distance, and **will explore options to acquire long-range air- and sea-launched missiles**.

## **ADVANCING CANADA'S GLOBAL INTERESTS AND VALUES**

To better enable military operations abroad and build on lessons learned from Ukraine's fight to defend itself, our investments will focus on

addressing threats to the safety and security of our troops abroad, and on their ability to contribute to Canadian and allied objectives. These investments will better prepare our military for potential conflict with advanced adversaries and addressing the growing sophistication of air and maritime threats. They will provide our troops with more operational depth and the ability to sustain themselves, along with the ability to strike at ranges longer than our adversaries.

We commit to providing the Canadian Armed Forces with the ability to accurately strike targets with greater effect from greater distance. We will **explore options for modernizing our artillery capabilities**. This will significantly improve the protection of our deployed personnel by providing them with the capacity to strike enemy positions from farther away and in a greater number of directions.

To maintain the Canadian Armed Forces' ability to contribute to contemporary and future operations, we will **improve the sustainment of our naval fleets**. This will include extending the life of the *Halifax-class* frigates and preserving the Royal Canadian Navy's interim at-sea replenishment capability. These investments will help Canada maintain a globally deployable naval fleet capable of supporting NATO and engaging in operations, exercises, training, and defence diplomacy with key allies and partners, among other activities. Timely maintenance coupled with regular upgrades will reinforce the Royal Canadian Navy's ability to quickly respond to unforeseen events.

We commit to equipping the Canadian Army to keep pace with the evolving demands of land-based operations. We will **explore options for upgrading or replacing our tank and light armoured vehicle fleets**. Even as new technologies and techniques proliferate, main battle tanks continue to have a decisive effect on the modern battlefield and remain key to conducting land operations against conventional militaries with advanced capabilities. Similarly, the Canadian Army's light armoured vehicle fleet is central to ensuring Canada can maintain its operational commitments, including to NATO, while maintaining a robust fleet at home for training and domestic operations. Canada **will explore establishing a light armoured vehicle production program** to replenish our fleet while also enabling industry to invest in a sustainable defence production capacity to support Canada and our NATO allies.

We commit to enabling the Canadian Armed Forces to conduct persistent long-range surveillance and launch precision strikes. We will **explore**

**options for acquiring a suite of surveillance and strike drones and counter-drone capabilities.**

A counter drone capability will ensure that the Canadian Armed Forces can neutralize drones that threaten our deployed forces, as well as those of our allies and partners. Both of these systems will equip Canada to protect its forces against the proliferation of drone technology that is now a feature of modern military operations.

To allow the Canadian Armed Forces to communicate securely and reliably with our deployed forces, allies and partners, we will **acquire a comprehensive worldwide satellite communication capability**. Working with our allies, we will jointly develop updated access to the satellite constellations that enable the military to operate effectively around the world, including by better defending its communications against jamming or disruptions by adversaries while deployed.



# CONCLUSION

We find ourselves at a pivotal moment. Canada's sovereignty, security, and prosperity are no longer guaranteed by the same conditions that have protected us until now. The coming decades will be more competitive and complex than those that came before. We need to be ready.

The objectives and initiatives laid out in this document will help Canada meet this moment and help maintain the security and prosperity that Canadians have long enjoyed, through a robust, world-class military and Defence Team that reflects the full diversity and talent that Canada has to offer.

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***Above all, *Our North, Strong and Free* is an investment in the sailors, soldiers, and aviators who serve Canada with great courage and devotion at a time of global uncertainty***

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Through *Our North, Strong and Free*, we will build a stronger Canadian Armed Forces that will do more for Canadians, based on a solid foundation and new capabilities to take on new threats. Our military will be focused on its core mission of keeping Canadians and Canada strong at home, by increasing its presence, reach, mobility, and responsiveness across the country, particularly in our changing Arctic and North. It will accelerate and expand the modernization of our continental defences, in partnership with our most important ally, the United States. From a position of strength, it will contribute more to our allies and partners in the Euro-Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions, who are facing growing challenges to their sovereignty and way of life. It will maintain Canada's role as a contributor to coalition and multinational missions around the world in support of our interests and values.

Above all, *Our North, Strong and Free* is an investment in the sailors, soldiers, and aviators who serve Canada with great courage and devotion at a time of global uncertainty. It will provide them and all Canadians with a renewed vision for our defence in a changing world. Canadians know that when our people in uniform deploy, they and their families make great sacrifices on our behalf. When the Government of Canada calls upon members of our military to deploy, at home or around in the world, they never fail in their duty—and Canada will always do whatever it takes to support them.

We make these investments because the Canadian Armed Forces is our insurance in an ever-changing world. In the decades to come, Canada will see growing challenges to our security and prosperity, from climate-related emergencies to increasingly persistent challenges from adversaries, including in the areas around Canada and North America.

*Our North, Strong and Free* sets the path for meeting these challenges.



# ANNEX A: FUNDING

Through *Our North, Strong and Free*, Canada will invest \$8.1 billion over the next five years and \$73 billion over the next twenty years in our national defence. The government is projecting our defence spending to GDP ratio to reach 1.76% in 2029-30, and the initiatives under this defence policy put Canada on track to exceed NATO's target of 20% for major equipment expenditures as a proportion of defence funding. Consistent with our NATO commitment, this defence policy also lays the foundations for future growth in the Canadian Armed Forces, including through a more regular cycle of review and investment. Our investments will enable the Canadian Armed Forces to adapt in a sustainable, responsible manner, guided by our evolving national security needs in a rapidly changing world.

## Strengthening our Foundation

millions of dollars, accrual basis

	2024- 2025	2025- 2026	2026- 2027	2027- 2028	2028- 2029	5-year total	20-year total 2024-2025 to 2043- 2044
Maintaining and Renewing National Defence Infrastructure	0	103	206	308	324	942	10,218
Sustaining Naval Vessels	293	376	436	446	376	1926	9941
Ammunition Supply and Production	15	137	308	566	735	1762	9461
Sustaining Military Equipment	202	256	312	325	346	1441	8962
Civilian Capacity	0	19	37	46	48	150	1827
Electronic Health Record Platform for Military Personnel	7	59	60	77	80	281	497
Housing for Canadian Armed Forces Personnel	0	0	1	2	4	7	295
NATO Innovation Fund	10	11	11	11	11	53	107
Improving Childcare for Canadian Armed Forces Personnel	13	18	22	23	25	100	100
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>539</b>	<b>980</b>	<b>1391</b>	<b>1803</b>	<b>1948</b>	<b>6661</b>	<b>41,409</b>



## The Right Capabilities for Canada

millions of dollars, accrual basis

	2024- 2025	2025- 2026	2026- 2027	2027- 2028	2028- 2029	5-year total	20-year total 2024-2025 to 2043- 2044
Tactical Helicopters	0	1	5	6	5	17	18,383
Worldwide Satellite Communications	0	8	15	15	12	51	5519
Enhancing Canada's Intelligence and Cyber Operations	73	115	186	244	299	917	2832
Long-range Missile Capability (Army)	0	1	67	133	199	401	2668
Maritime Sensors	0	4	5	4	3	17	1395
Airborne Early Warning Aircraft	0	5	6	6	5	23	307
Satellite Ground Station	0	0	7	8	8	23	222
Northern Operational Support Hubs	0	2	5	6	6	18	218
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>295</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>1467</b>	<b>31,545</b>
<b>Gross Funding</b>	<b>612</b>	<b>1118</b>	<b>1686</b>	<b>2226</b>	<b>2486</b>	<b>8128</b>	<b>72,954</b>
<i>Less: Funding Reallocated from Strong, Secure, Engaged 2017</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>(50)</i>	<i>(52)</i>	<i>(55)</i>	<i>(157)</i>	<i>(694)</i>
<b>Net Incremental Funding</b>	<b>612</b>	<b>1118</b>	<b>1636</b>	<b>2174</b>	<b>2431</b>	<b>7971</b>	<b>72,259</b>

Note: Numbers may not add due to rounding.

Note: On an accrual basis, the cost of acquiring an asset is spread over its useful life, rather than being recorded at the time the bills are paid. Operating funding for the asset is recorded in the year that the expenditure is made.

# ANNEX B: WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED SINCE 2017 UNDER *STRONG, SECURE, ENGAGED*

With *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, we provided Canadians with a clear plan to ensure that Defence has the necessary capabilities and capacity to respond to evolving security challenges. It included landmark investments in our people, and the renewal of core Navy, Air Force and Army fleets. It was backed by a long-term and stable funding commitment to increase defence spending by 70% over 10 years. Seven years into our plan, more than three-quarters of these initiatives are in the delivery stage or already completed.

## SUPPORTING OUR PEOPLE

Above all, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* was a commitment to the members of the Canadian Armed Forces. We improved the quality of life for members and their families, including through tax relief for members deployed on international operations as well as essential services in total health and wellness, family relocation support, and transition services for retiring members. Furthermore, most members received pay increases by 2024 to ensure that military compensation remains aligned with pay in the Public Service, and to ensure the attraction and retention of the highest standard of personnel required for the challenges of service.

Defence also began the essential task of building a more inclusive and diverse team suited for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Our military members and Defence civilians have the right to work in a respectful and inclusive environment free from harassment and discrimination of all kinds. Strengthening an institutional culture of inclusion is not just the right thing to do, it is foundational to operational effectiveness—because diverse groups make better decisions. Since 2017 Defence has taken important steps to prevent or eradicate harassment in the military, modernize the military justice system, examine and address discrimination and hateful conduct, and institute permanent and long-lasting changes to organizational culture. The GBA Plus Enterprise Approach is a critical capability for

preventing systemic harm and discrimination as well as increasing our operational effectiveness.

## MODERNIZING OUR MILITARY

*Strong, Secure, Engaged* also made significant improvements to our military capabilities through the replacement of core platforms and targeted investments in emerging technologies. This includes:

- Delivery of four of six planned *Harry DeWolf*-class Arctic and Offshore Patrol Vessels, which has increased the Royal Canadian Navy's presence and reach in Canada's Arctic.
- Advancing the program to deliver 15 Canadian Surface Combatants for the Royal Canadian Navy, the largest shipbuilding project in Canada since the Second World War. Initial construction of these new ships is set to begin this year.
- Acquiring a fleet of new armoured combat support vehicles—built by Canadian workers in London, Ontario—will enhance the Canadian Army's capacity for effective operations at home and abroad.
- Acquiring or upgrading a series of Royal Canadian Air Force platforms: 88 new F-35 fighter jets, nine CC-330 strategic tanker transport aircraft, up to 16 new P-8A Poseidon multi-mission aircraft, 16 new or upgraded Cormorant helicopters; and 11 SkyGuardian remotely piloted aircraft.
- Strengthening the Canadian Armed Forces' cyber resilience through the Cyber Mission Assurance Program, in partnership with the Communications Security Establishment, and establishing a cyber security certification program to protect our defence supply chains from cyber threats.

- Standing up 3 Canadian Space Division, which is responsible for delivering space power in support of Canadian and allied military operations, ensuring space domain awareness, and defending and protecting our satellites and other space capabilities.

## **RESPONDING TO A CHANGING WORLD: CANADIAN ARMED FORCES OPERATIONS FROM 2017-2024**

Since 2017, the Canadian Armed Forces has deployed in larger numbers and in more contexts than was anticipated in *Strong, Secure, Engaged*.

Canada remains a committed partner in NATO's collective defence and a steadfast supporter of Ukraine, deploying ships, aircraft and land forces under Operation REASSURANCE to support NATO's measures to deter further Russian aggression. In particular, Canada is increasing its leadership contribution to NATO through the expansion of our presence in Latvia to a multinational brigade, with up to 2200 persistently deployed troops there by 2026. This includes investment to rapidly acquire military capabilities specifically for this mission, such as short-range air defence, munitions and command and communications systems.

Separately, Canada has committed \$13.3 billion in multifaceted assistance donations to Ukraine, including armoured vehicles, main battle tanks, anti-tank weapons, small arms, artillery, ammunition, drones, demining equipment, and other materiel, sourced from Canadian Armed Forces inventory or purchased through partnerships with industry. The Canadian Armed Forces has delivered over 15 million pounds of military aid from Canada, allies and partners to Ukraine. Moreover, hundreds of Canadian Armed Forces personnel have deployed to Europe under Operation UNIFIER to train members of the Armed Forces

of Ukraine. Since the start of Operation UNIFIER in 2015, the Canadian Armed Forces has trained more than 40,000 members of the Ukrainian military.

In 2022, Canada released our Indo-Pacific Strategy, under which Defence increased Canada's military presence in a region that is vital to global stability. Operation HORIZON boosted the Canadian Armed Forces' annual naval deployment from two to three surface combatants, and increased participation in international exercises and security cooperation with regional partners. Since 2018, Canadian frigates and maritime patrol aircraft have deployed to the Indo-Pacific as part of Canada's contribution to a multinational effort in support of United Nations Security Council sanctions imposed against North Korea. Operation NEON contributes to bolstering the integrity of the global sanctions regime. Canada has also worked successfully with partners to build capacity and increase cooperation on advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda in the Indo-Pacific.

In other regions of the world, the Canadian Armed Forces has engaged in a wide range of military activities, from combat and counter-terrorism operations to humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, training and capacity building. In the global commons, Canadian Armed Forces operations advance maritime security, cyber and space defence, and the sharing of information. Through Operation IMPACT, the Canadian Armed Forces advances Canada's interests in the Middle East at a critical time. Through Operation PRESENCE, the Canadian Armed Forces contributes military capabilities to the UN system and UN peace missions around the world. In all operations, the Canadian Armed Forces supports Canada's Feminist Foreign Policy and our National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

# ANNEX C: CANADA'S NORAD MODERNIZATION PLAN

In *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, Canada committed to outlining its investments to modernize Canada's contributions to NORAD at a later date, and in June 2022 released Canada's NORAD Modernization Plan—the largest investment in Canada's NORAD capabilities in a generation.

NORAD has been the cornerstone of North American defence since it was established in 1958. It remains an alliance like no other in the world today—a trusted partnership manifested through a binational command with authority over shared geography.

The global security environment and military technologies have evolved significantly since the last major investment in NORAD's capabilities in the 1980s. We face aerospace threats that can outpace our defences, as Russia and China are rapidly fielding advanced weapons specifically designed to threaten North America. The North Warning System is growing obsolete, our command and control systems need to be digitalized to operate at machine speed, and our northern airfield infrastructure needs to be reconfigured to mount effective responses to potential threats. Canada must boost its aerospace defences to protect our interests and assert our sovereignty.

For these reasons, our new investments prioritize key areas jointly identified by Canada and the United States as NORAD's most pressing requirements. These include:

- **Bolstering our ability to detect threats earlier by modernizing our surveillance systems.** Today's advanced weapons can be launched from further away, travel faster and are more manoeuvrable. To meet this threat, Canada will invest \$6.9 billion in new technologies to modernize our surveillance systems. This will include a more effective, layered surveillance system composed of over-the-horizon radars and satellites.

- **Improving our ability to understand and communicate threats to decision makers in a timely manner.** An effective command, control and communications system maximizes the value of vehicles, vessels and aircraft by connecting them into a single network. Canada is investing \$4.13 billion in the following ways:

- o Modernized command and control information systems;
- o Cloud-based command and control, equipped with machine learning and other computing technologies;
- o A new combined aerospace operations centre from which to plan and execute air operations;
- o Enhanced long-term Arctic satellite communications, providing coverage at extreme northern altitudes;
- o Position navigation and timing air navigation infrastructure and systems, suited to support air operations in remote areas; and
- o Improved radio communications for non-satellite command and control.

- **Strengthening our ability to deter and defeat aerospace threats by modernizing our air weapons systems.** Canada's current and new fighter aircraft will be equipped with advanced air-to-air missiles to maintain their operational advantage against new, more technologically-advanced missile threats. Canada is investing \$6.38 billion to increase the number of short- and medium-range air-to-air missiles, and acquire new long-range air-to-air missiles for both the CF-18 fighter aircraft and the new F-35 fighter aircraft.

- **Ensuring the Canadian Armed Forces can sustain a strong military response through investments in new infrastructure and support capabilities.** Our airfields and supporting infrastructure will be modernized and improved to support the new aircraft and the broader range of aircraft needed to mount an effective

tive response to air-based threats. Canada is investing \$15.68 billion for infrastructure and support capabilities, including the following:

- o Infrastructure support for additional strategic tanker transport aircraft;
- o Upgrades to NORAD Forward Operating Locations at Inuvik, Yellowknife and Iqaluit, and Canadian Armed Forces Base Goose Bay;
- o Infrastructure upgrades for the new fleet of F-35 fighter aircraft; and
- o Modernization of air weapons training infrastructure.

Wherever possible, we will be investing in airfields, roadways and infrastructure in consultation with local and Indigenous partners. By prioritizing multi-purpose investments, Defence will aim to meet the needs of our military while partnering with northern communities and other government departments, to ensure all can benefit from collective investments where possible.

- **Future-proofing our capabilities to defend North America through investments in science and technology.** Canada will support the ongoing evolution of continental defence capabilities with investments supporting researchers, innovators and entrepreneurs in assessing new and emerging threats, evolving research and development work, and co-developing innovative technological solutions in immediate priority areas:

- o Polar over-the-horizon radar systems;
- o Hypersonic and advanced cruise missile defence;
- o Novel and robust space systems in low earth orbit;
- o Autonomy and counter-autonomy;
- o Undersea surveillance;
- o Cyber and artificial intelligence;
- o Quantum technologies;
- o Cloud-enabled command, control, communications and computers intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance; and
- o Enabling defence research and development in the Arctic.

These areas of investment deliver on the priorities identified in the 2021 Joint Statement on NORAD Modernization issued by the Minister of National Defence and the United States Secretary of Defense. The majority of projects will reach Initial Operational Capability within the next decade.

Canada's NORAD modernization plan is a fundamental component of our response to the growing threat environment affecting Canada and the Arctic and North America more broadly. These efforts are important and necessary first steps that, when combined with the initiatives laid out in this defence policy, will restore the military advantage that we have long enjoyed on the continent, and ensure that Canada, the Arctic and our approaches do not become an avenue of attack on North America.

# ANNEX D: WHAT WE HEARD: DEFENCE POLICY REVIEW CONSULTATIONS

This defence policy was underpinned by significant consultations with Canadians, allies and partners, building on the extensive consultations undertaken in the years since *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, including on culture change efforts, the development of our NORAD modernization plan and through our academic and expert engagement program. We engaged the Canadian public, Indigenous partners, industry, parliamentarians, defence experts, and allies and partners. Additionally, a dedicated online platform launched in the first half of 2023 received more than 1500 submissions from Canadians across the country.

The message was clear. Canadians expect the following:

- The Canadian Armed Forces will be there for them, at home and abroad;
- Our military members and their families will be well-supported;
- Canadian Armed Forces members will be equipped with the modern tools they need to do the job their governments asks of them;
- Canada will make valuable contributions to our alliances;
- Defence's relationship with industry needs to be deeper and more strategic; and
- Canada needs to respond to the rapidly changing strategic environment with urgency and clarity of purpose.

Experts stressed that culture change is critical to ensuring we can attract and retain talent from all segments of Canadian society, and to improving the quality of leadership and operational effectiveness. They pointed to the limited accessibility of recruiting centres, overworked recruiters, and overly lengthy and complex bureaucratic processes as obstacles to attracting new talent. Furthermore, many Canadians cited the burden of frequent postings, a lack of spousal employment opportunities,

limited access to health and childcare, an oversaturated housing market, and high costs associated with relocation as key challenges to increasing the appeal of a career with the Canadian Armed Forces.

On defence procurement, industry representatives, defence experts, allies, partners, and private citizens all advised that Canada needs to do more to ensure the security, relevance, and effectiveness of our defence industrial base. Industry representatives emphasized that the relationship with Canadian industry needs to be reset and long-term strategies for cooperation are needed between government and industry. Industry and experts also called for faster and more flexible defence procurement, secure supply chains, and investments to modernize defence infrastructure, particularly in Canada's North.

Canadians consistently agreed that the global security environment is becoming more volatile and unpredictable. Accelerating threats have compressed time horizons and heightened the need for new capability and infrastructure investments. Strategic competition between states is a path to major power conflict. Intensifying environmental crises, driven or augmented by climate change, and threats posed by malign below-threshold activities, including cyber attacks, disinformation, and foreign interference require new approaches to national defence.

Canadians told us that decisive action was needed to ensure a diverse, well-equipped, and resilient military. This is a non-negotiable requirement of a 21<sup>st</sup> century military.

Going forward, The Department of National will explore ways and means of adapting our engagement approach so that more regular consultation contributes to better implementation of defence policy. We intend to continue these conversations on an enduring basis in order to collaboratively identify problems as they evolve, integrate diverse points of view, and develop new solutions in the years ahead.