

Canada's National Security Strategy

The vision of the future set out here is one that would see the adoption of a first ever made-in-Canada defence strategy that has its roots in doctrine that is as old as Canada itself. It would also see our current defence department and related force structure replaced over time by a streamlined, slimmed down, "ready-to-go" defence organization comprised of two joint commands and one special forces group, all reporting to a joint national military headquarters.

After seeing the bloody effects of terrorist strikes against civilian targets in the United States, Indonesia and Spain, should Canadians accept the validity of the still extant 1994 *Defence White Paper*? Or should we instead demand that our political and military leadership adhere to a legislated and well-ordered plan for the ongoing development of the security policies necessary to effectively deal with the harsh realities of today's world?

Have we become so convinced that we live in a "fire proof house" that we accept a string of government leaders who allow more than a decade to slip by while they endlessly debate our security and defence plans? Especially when we know that our continued security and sovereignty is not guaranteed, and the risk of doing nothing is incalculable.

The solution is for Parliament to immediately enact a *Canada Security Act* (CSA) setting out the Prime Minister's responsibility for the nation's security and defence. This Act should be trenchant, concise, and provide institutional stability to security policy-making. It should also ensure the presence of a continuing professional military voice in the formulation of related foreign and domestic policies. It should be the keystone in our national security strategy, but not displace other existing legal instruments, such as the *National Defence Act*, the *Emergency Act*, or the *Emergency Preparedness Act*.

Mr Martin's government's national security policy, "Securing an Open Society," as welcome as it may be, will not meet the needs of Canada's future. Unforeseen and unpredictable domestic and international events would limit the flexibility of its policies. "Securing an Open Society" contains policies that will be quickly discarded by successor governments as they are obliged to respond to changing geo-political circumstances. An effective CSA would see the establishment of a National Security Council (NSC) to supersede the *Cabinet Committee on Security, Public Health and Emergencies*.

Unlike the toothless National Security Advisory Council described in "Securing an Open Society," the required NSC

would be a true policy-making body, with a substantive role in the formulation and implementation of intelligence, foreign affairs, national security, and defence policies.

Under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister – and with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defence (MND), and Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Clerk of the Privy Council, and Director Canadian Security Intelligence Service as its key members – the NSC would provide for regular, interdepartmental review of major foreign, national security, intelligence, and defence issues. This would culminate in discussion and decision at the highest levels of government. Regular policy discussions would keep the principal advisers fully informed, in step with one another, and prepared to react knowledgeably to crises. The Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS), or in his absence the Deputy CDS, would be the NSC's principal military adviser, and, subject to the wishes of the Prime Minister, attend and participate in its meetings.

To give it teeth, a CSA would require any newly elected Prime Minister to transmit to Parliament a comprehensive report on the national security and defence strategy of Canada, and a proposed White Paper on Defence, not later than 180-days after first taking office. In addition, the CSA would require the sitting Prime Minister to transmit an updated, comprehensive report with any proposed changes to the extant Defence White Paper to Parliament by 31 March of each year. And the CSA would require the Department of National Defence to submit a comprehensive National Defence Strategy Report to the NSC within 180-days of Parliament's approval of a new White Paper on Defence, and by March 31 of every third year after that. This report would include the MND's and the CDS's assessment of the political, strategic, and military risks associated with carrying out the missions expressed in the Defence White Paper, and a discussion of the National defence strategy and force structure best suited to carry out that strategy.

Without a viable *Canada Security Act*, this prosperous, 21st century nation of ours may soon earn the unenviable distinction of being the sole remaining liberal democracy with its security and defence policy firmly rooted in the 20th century. **F**



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This article is a condensation of his book, **Securing Our Sovereignty** – a revised version of the original paper: *The Defence of Canada After 9/11*.