



Canadian Voice of
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Women's International
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March 2, 2026

The Right Honourable Mark Carney, P.C., M.P.
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A2

Th Honourable David McGuinty P.C., M.P.
Minister of National Defence
101 Colonel By Drive
Ottawa ON K1A 0K2

Re: JOINT LETTER: We **oppose** Canada's new Defence Industrial Strategy – More weapons production and weapons exports are bad for women, children, the climate and the environment

Dear Prime Minister Carney and Defence Minister McGuinty,

We, the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace (VOW) and the Women's International League for Peace & Freedom Canada (WILPF), are writing to you to express our opposition in the strongest possible terms to Canada's new Defence Industrial Strategy (DIS). We believe that the DIS is a dangerous roadmap to reach the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) 5% GDP target and to rebuild, rearm and reinvest in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) over the next decade (Appendix 1). The DIS will be supported by a new Defence Investment Agency, Defence Advisory Forum, Defence Industry Resilience Program, and a Defence Skills Agenda. With these defence initiatives, the federal government is irresponsibly and recklessly militarizing the Canadian economy, which will harm women, children, the climate and the environment and will risk more violence and war.

The DIS will expedite the procurement of weapons and the doubling of arms exports. Yet, the 58-page DIS does **not** mention the words "women", "gender", "climate change", or "(natural) environment". There is no gender-based analysis or environmental impact statement included in the DIS. The strategy does **not** acknowledge the adverse impacts from these weapons in society, the carbon emissions, and the waste of critical minerals. As well, arms control, disarmament, non-proliferation and peace are **absent** from the strategy. The DIS undermines Canada's commitment to

the *Women, Peace and Security* agenda and the *Beijing Platform for Action* for women and will prevent Canada's achievement of the Paris Agreement and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

To implement the DIS, the federal government is spending an exorbitant amount of Canadian tax dollars: \$180 billion for defence procurement and \$290 billion in defence-related capital investment in Canada, a combined \$470 billion, in the next ten years. Military procurement and infrastructure do not benefit women and children. The federal government's *Impacts* statement in Annex 6 of the budget, *Canada, Strong*, admitted that investments in the military disproportionately benefit men (Appendix 2). The *Impacts* statement further explained that the "Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) are predominantly *white men*" (Appendix 3).

The DIS also claims that it will create "125,000 high-paying careers" in Canada. In his speech in Montreal, the Prime Minister stated, "The Defence Industrial Strategy is a jobs strategy. It will create high-paying careers across the entire supply chain – from steel and aluminum welders to engineers, scientists, and manufacturers who turn Canadian resources into the equipment, ammunition, vehicles, and other critical capabilities that keep Canadians safe." Yet, research shows that the vast majority of these "quality jobs" will go to men.

The report, *State of Canada's Defence Industry 2024*, which was prepared by the Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries (CADSI) and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED), admitted that women comprise only 27% of the defence industry (Appendix 4). Thus, it will be predominantly men who will get these "well-paying jobs" for manufacturing more weapons for the male-dominated military to the detriment of women.

Further, the federal government plans to recruit 13,000 soldiers for the CAF, which will also benefit men. As shown by the Department of National Defence's *Statistics on the Women in the CAF*, there are only 16% women in the military. Canada is recruiting more soldiers for a patriarchal institution that is premised on the threat and use of force and where women have been sexually harassed and assaulted. In December 2023, DND revealed that sexual assault rates in the military doubled in the past five years. The DIS is tasked with supplying the CAF for operations related to fighting not peacekeeping. The UN Peacekeeping Office showed that Canada is at its lowest level of peacekeeping with only 27 soldiers on UN peace support operations.

The DIS will also "stand up a dedicated unit to lead and coordinate a new whole-of-government strategy that boosts Canadian defence exports," which means arms exports to other countries that injure and kill people. The government will increase defence exports by 50%. Canada's current arms exports are causing harm and human rights violations around the world. For example, Canada has been supplying weapons directly and indirectly to Israel, through a loophole to the U.S., to conduct

a horrific genocide against the Palestinian people. As well, Canada has sent \$8.5 billion in weapons and military assistance to Ukraine since February 2022, which has prolonged the war not ended it. Canada has not conducted any diplomacy to help end these deadly and destructive conflicts.

Moreover, to achieve the NATO Defence Investment Pledge of 5% of GDP by 2035, the Prime Minister admitted that the federal government will increase military spending from \$44 billion/year in 2025 to \$150 billion/year by 2035, despite poverty and climate change worsening across the country. Military spending represents an opportunity cost and trade-off of **not** spending on federal programs that help Canadians and expand the green, care economy. The urgent priorities for Canadians are affordable housing, health care, education, pharmacare, dental care, child care, climate resilience, and Indigenous reconciliation. Increasing military spending and expanding the defence industrial base do not achieve any of these Canadian priorities. Moreover, the Liberal government's 493-page budget did **not** make any reference to the "green economy" or the "care economy," which supports the well-being of Canadians and is the sector that is dominated by women.

The DIS will create an American-style, market-driven military-industrial complex with little oversight that will enrich defence contractors and investors, but impoverish Canadians, particularly women and children. While the federal government is increasing spending for the defence sector and recruitment for the military, it is cutting crucial federal programs that help Canadians and will weaken the economy in the long-run. As reported by the CBC, the government is laying off staff, including many women, in the Departments of Environment and Climate Change Canada, Fisheries and Oceans, Heritage Canada, Agriculture Canada, Crown-Indigenous Relations, Employment and Social Development Canada and Health Canada. We also note that the government is decreasing the meagre budget of the Department of Women and Gender Equality while increasing the budget of the Department of National Defence (Appendix 5).

Last September, the United Nations Secretary General António Guterres released an important report, *The Security We Need: Rebalancing Military Spending for a Sustainable and Peaceful Future*, to all member states. It raised alarms about ever rising military expenditures and urged states to reconceive security based on human needs not militarism. It also showed that more jobs could be created in the care economy over the military (Appendix 6). The report made the following important points on defence spending and gender inequality:

- "Higher military spending worsens gender inequality primarily through crowding-out effects on social expenditure, as women and girls disproportionately rely on social programmes."
- "The unbalanced nature of female-to-male employment in the military sector has long-term effects on human capital accumulation, as women are more likely to invest income in health and education for themselves and their children."
- "Evidence suggests that high levels of militarism exacerbate gender-based violence."

The UN report also emphasized that the climate change targets and sustainable development goals are not on track, because of inadequate financial resources. It warned, “Military expenditure harms the planet because it is emissions-intensive. Each dollar allocated to the military generates more than twice the greenhouse gas emissions of a dollar spent elsewhere.” This month, the Canadian Climate Institute published a report that showed that Canada “is not on track to meet any of its climate goals, including its 2035 target and net zero emissions by 2050.” Yet, the federal government has ignored the recommendations of the UN and is diverting billions of tax dollars to carbon-intensive re-armament. More weapons will make war more likely and will make global warming worse.

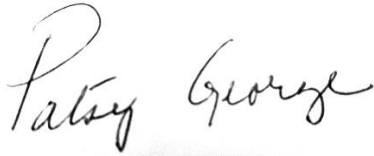
In addition, the UN Secretary General’s annual report on *Women Peace and Security* concluded that, “Women peacebuilders’ universal message to governments and armed actors is unequivocal: **end the wars, respect international law and disarm.**” However, the Canadian government is doing the exact opposite and ignoring the UN recommendations and the voices of women peacebuilders and spending hundreds of billions on re-armament.

We are asking you to reply to our ten questions about the DIS and your plan to drastically increase to military spending over the next decade:

1. Why is the federal government increasing military spending despite the UN Secretary General’s warning in *The Security We Need: Rebalancing Military Spending for a Sustainable and Peaceful Future*? What is the threat assessment that demands more weapons when we are facing catastrophic climate change?
2. Why is the government cutting federal programs and laying off staff but increasing military spending?
3. Why is the federal government ignoring its obligations under the *Women, Peace and Security* agenda and the *Beijing Platform for Action* and prioritizing the military and men with the Defence Industrial Strategy (DIS)?
4. Why is the DIS “urgent” and what is the rush?
5. Why is the federal government prioritizing the production and export of weapons?
6. Why is there no gender-based analysis of the DIS?
7. What are the climate and environmental costs of the production and export of weapons planned under the DIS?
8. What are the social impacts for women in Canada and in other countries of the DIS?
9. Why were women’s groups and the Canadian public not consulted on the DIS?
10. Why has the federal government not released any white paper on foreign policy or arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation in over twenty-two years?

We are calling on the federal government to cancel the DIS, cut military spending, and invest in peace and a green, care economy that will truly defend and protect Canadians. Please see the references below and six appendices enclosed to this letter. We look forward to your replies. Thank you for your consideration of our grave concerns.

Sincerely,



Co-chair Patsy George

On behalf of co-chair Ellen Woodsworth and board the Women's International League for Peace & Freedom (WILPF) Canada



Co-chair Lyn Adamson

On behalf of co-chair Hannah Hadikin and the board the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace (VOW)

cc:

Hon. Pierre Poilievre, Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada

Hon. Yves-François Blanchet, Leader of the Bloc Québécois

Hon. Don Davis, Interim Leader of the New Democratic Party

Hon. Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party of Canada

Jacqueline Neapole, Executive Director, CRIAW-ICREF

Shelagh Day – Human Rights Committee Chair, Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action (FAFIA)

Canadian Voice of Women for Peace (VOW) is the largest national feminist peace organization with members and chapters across the country. VOW was established in 1960 and is a non-partisan, non-governmental organization comprised of a network of diverse women. VOW's main office is in Toronto. VOW runs many campaigns related to women, peace, disarmament and anti-militarism. VOW has consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and every year brings a delegation of Canadian women to the UN Commission on the Status of Women conference. For over 60 years, VOW has tirelessly advocated for a world without war. VOW stands for a feminist peace based on nonviolence, disarmament, diplomacy and common security with gender equality.

Web site: <http://vowpeace.org>

Women’s International League for Peace & Freedom (WILPF) Canada is a membership-led organization committed to a feminist peace, social justice, and gender equality. We are a non-partisan, non-governmental organization members across the country. We are the national section of WILPF International, which is the world's longest standing women peace organization founded in 1915, with 32 Sections and 13 Groups across Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. Two of our leaders, Jane Addams and Emily Greene Balch, won the Nobel Peace Prize. WILPF International is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland and has a disarmament program called *Reaching Critical Will* in New York. Our *Peace Women* program monitors the United Nations’ Women, Peace & Security agenda and we have an international *Environment Working Group*.

Web site: wilpfcanada.ca

SOURCES

Beijing Platform for Action

<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>

Canada Strong, Budget 2025

<https://budget.canada.ca/2025/report-rapport/pdf/budget-2025.pdf>

Canada’s Defence Industrial Strategy

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/industrial-strategy/security-sovereignty-prosperity.html>

Canada off course for climate targets, with more riding on fewer policies: expert report

<https://climateinstitute.ca/news/canada-off-course-for-climate-targets/>

Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces address the Statistics Canada 2022 Survey on Sexual Misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces, December 2023:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2023/12/department-of-national-defence-and-the-canadian-armed-forces-address-the-statistics-canada-2022-survey-on-sexual-misconduct-in-the-canadian-armed-f.html>

NATO Defence Expenditures Report (2014-2025)

<https://www.nato.int/content/dam/nato/webready/documents/finance/def-exp-2025-en.pdf>

State of Canada’s Defence Industry Report (2024), Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) and the Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries (CADSI):

<https://www.defenceandsecurity.ca/media/proxyDocument&a=940&r=243&v=4a9699346a3843bed16486a5363ba3d9>

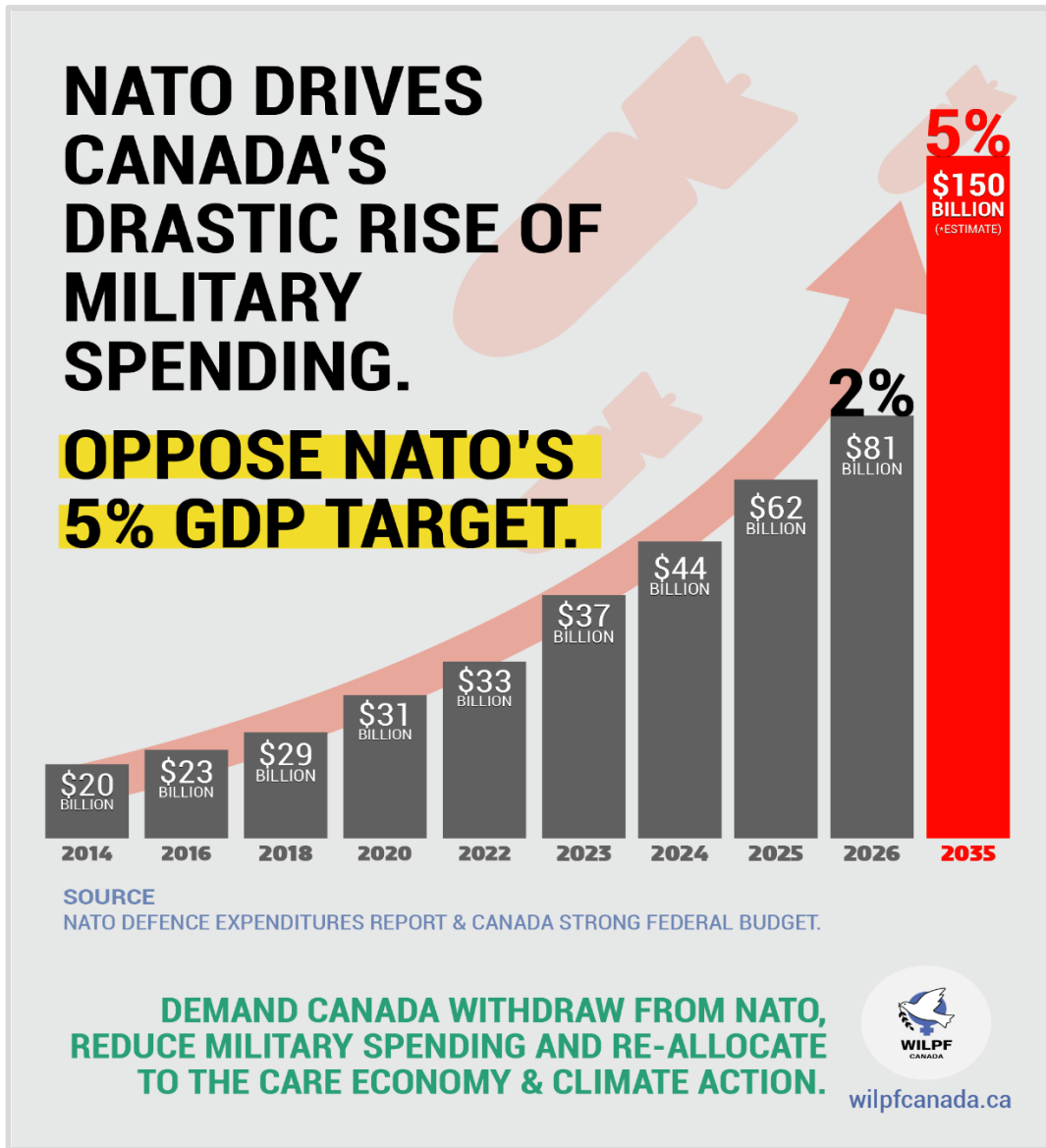
United Nations Secretary General's Women Peace and Security Report 2025 (S/2025/556):
<https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/report/united-nations-security-council-women-and-peace-and-security-report-of-the-secretary-general/n2523645-1.pdf>

Women in the Canadian Armed Forces, Statistics:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/women-in-the-forces.html>

APPENDICES

(1)

Canada's Increase to Military Spending from 2014 to 2035



Source: NATO Expenditures Report (2014 - 2025):

<https://www.nato.int/content/dam/nato/webready/documents/finance/def-exp-2025-en.pdf>

(2)

Gender Impacts Statement for Military Programs in the Federal Budget, *Canada Strong*.

Budget 2025				
Annex 6: Impacts report				
Chapter 4 - Protecting Canada's Sovereignty and Security				
Rebuilding, Rearming and Reinvesting in the Canadian Armed Forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Majority men</u> (60 per cent - 79 per cent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Prosperity• Society• Good Governance	55,882	View summary
A New Defence Investment Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Majority men</u> (60 per cent - 79 per cent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good Governance	71	View summary
Operation REASSURANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Majority men</u> (60 per cent - 79 per cent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good Governance	2,649	View summary
Operation AMARNA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Majority men</u> (60 per cent - 79 per cent)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good Governance	181	View summary

Source: Canada Strong, Budget 2025, Annex 6, Impacts Report, 14:

<https://budget.canada.ca/2025/report-rapport/anx6-en.html>

(3)

Federal funding for the Military in the Federal Budget, *Canada Strong*.

Rebuilding, Rearming, and Reinvesting in the Canadian Armed Forces

Funding to the Department of National Defence and other departments to rebuild, rearm, and reinvest in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF).

This measure would benefit all Canadians and the citizens of our allied partners by supporting the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) collective defence and helping to preserve the rules-based international order upon which Canada's security and economic interests depend. Members of CAF would indirectly benefit by having the resources and equipment they need to protect Canadian and allied sovereignty. Data from 2024 indicates that 16.6 per cent of CAF members identify as women, 9.4 per cent as racialised, and 2.8 per cent as Indigenous. Workers in defence industries, of whom 27 per cent are women, would also indirectly benefit from the increased access to capital and bolstered supply chains for these companies.

A New Defence Investment Agency

Funding to Public Services and Procurement Canada to establish the Defence Investment Agency and to increase capacity and modernise its Industrial Security Program to support the Defence Investment Agency and Canada's defence industry.

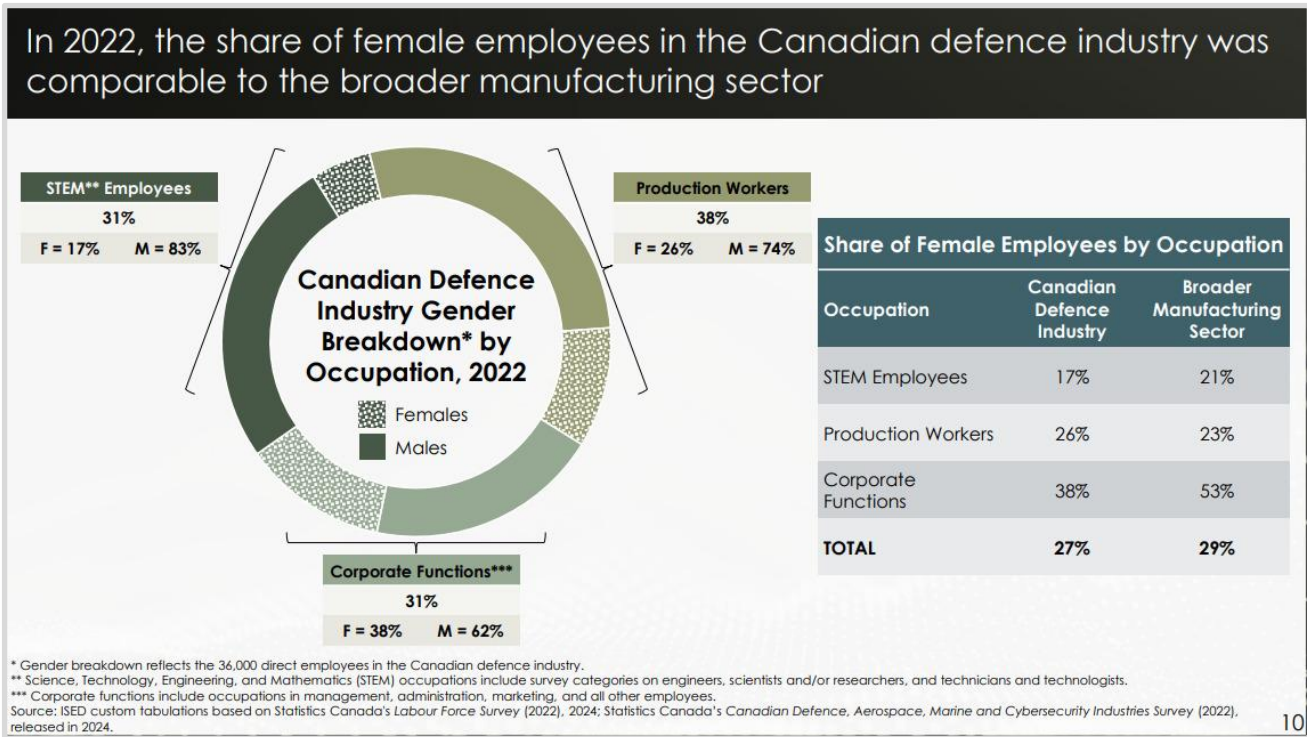
This measure would benefit all Canadians by ensuring Canada's military is equipped to perform in operations at home and abroad, which helps to preserve the rules-based international order upon which Canada's security and economic interests depend. For members of the Canadian Armed Forces, who are predominantly White men, procuring defence capabilities will improve working conditions and help ensure they have the equipment needed to fulfill their duties. Indirectly, benefits will accrue to workers in the defence and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics industries, which predominantly employ men.

Source: Canada Strong, Budget 2025, Annex 6, Impacts Report, 34:

<https://budget.canada.ca/2025/report-rapport/anx6-en.html>

(4)

Low Percentage of Women in the Canadian defence industry, 2024



Source: State of Canada's Defence Industry Report, Spring 2024, Prepared by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) and the Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries (CADSI):

<https://www.defenceandsecurity.ca/media/proxyDocument&a=940&r=243&v=4a9699346a3843bed16486a5363ba3d9>

(5)

Look how little funding for Women and Gender Equality in Budget 2025, *Canada Strong*.

Women and Gender Equality

The Department for Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) empowers women and 2SLGBTQI+ people through programs that enhance meaningful participation in our economy. The Department's work extends across government, and affects the lives of Canadians, ensuring that women, girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ people can achieve their full potential.

Budget 2025 proposes to provide WAGE with funding of \$528.4 million over four years, starting in 2026-27, with \$132.1 million ongoing, to continue conducting its critical work towards eliminating discrimination and advancing the rights of women and 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

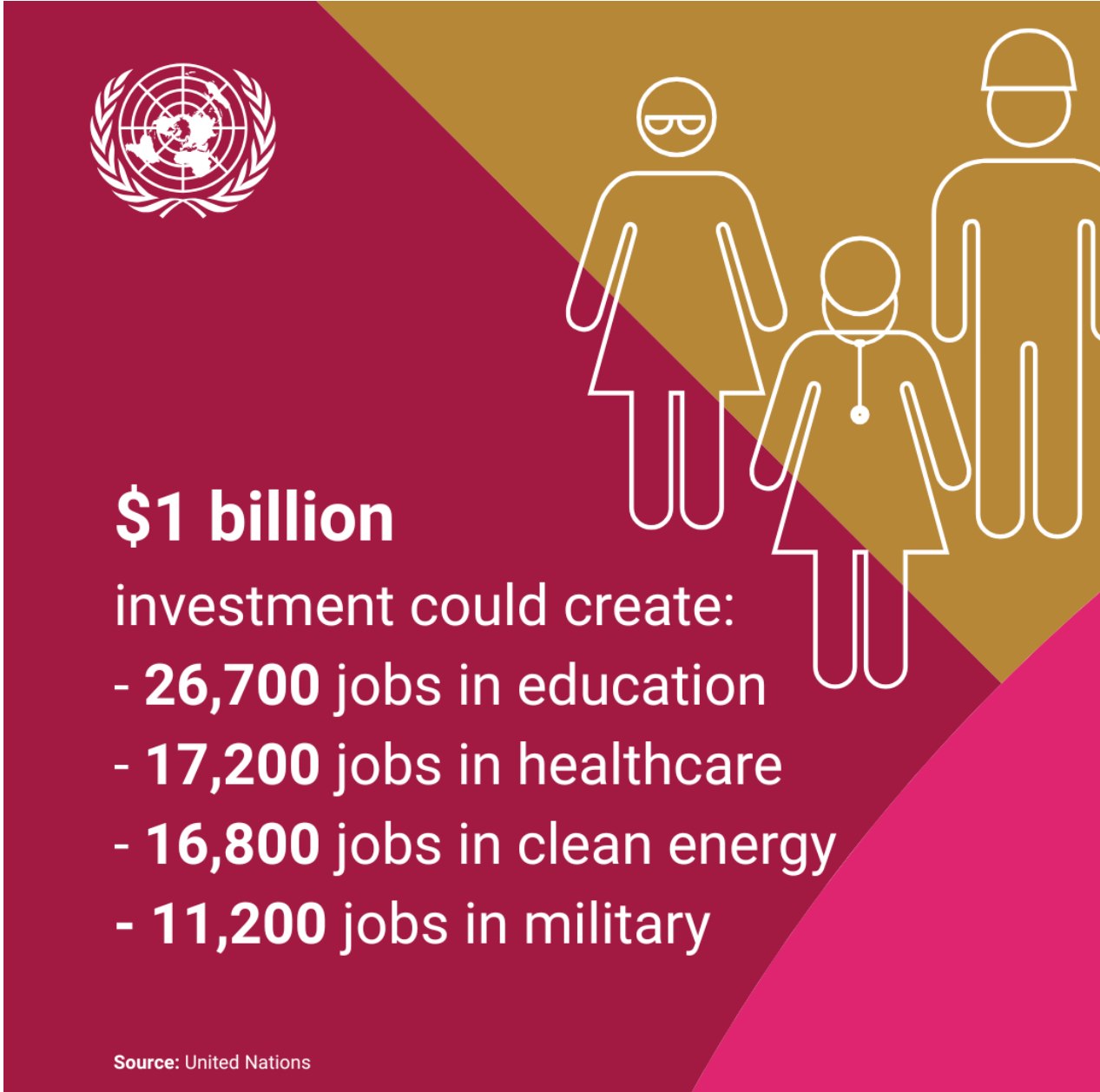
To protect the essential mandate of WAGE, the department will be identifying savings of 2 per cent of its review base.

millions of dollars	2026- 2027	2027- 2028	2028- 2029	2029- 2030	Ongoing
Women and Gender Equality Canada					
Total	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0	8.0

Note: Final allocation between review themes to be determined following Budget 2025.

Source: *Canada Strong, Budget 2025, Annex 3, p. 330*: <https://budget.canada.ca/2025/report-rapport/pdf/budget-2025.pdf>

(6) The Security We Need: Rebalancing Military Spending for a Sustainable and Peaceful Future



\$1 billion
investment could create:

- **26,700** jobs in education
- **17,200** jobs in healthcare
- **16,800** jobs in clean energy
- **11,200** jobs in military

Source: United Nations

Source: *The Security We Need: Rebalancing Military Spending for a Sustainable and Peaceful Future*, United Nations: <https://www.un.org/en/peace-and-security/the-true-cost-of-peace>