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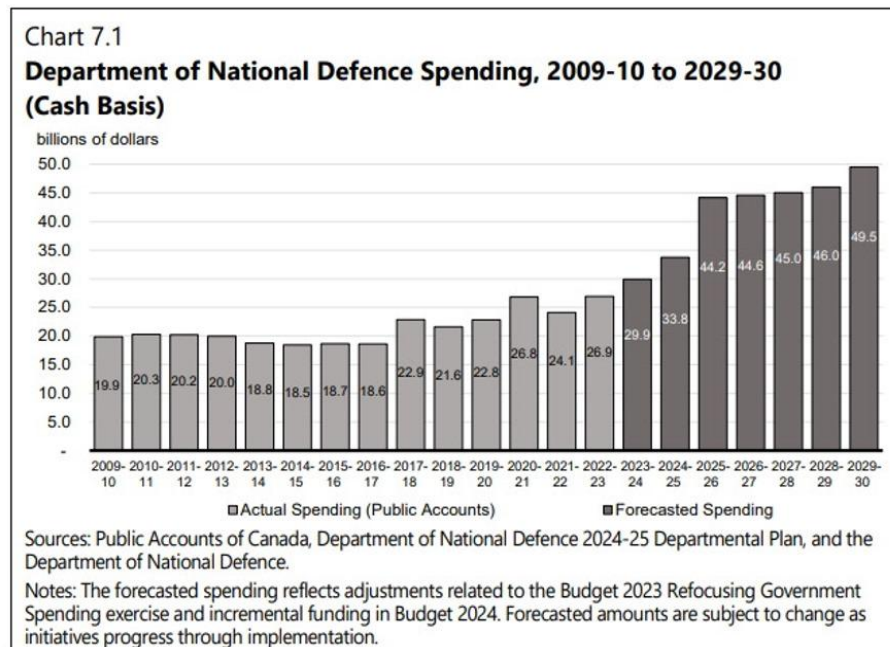
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**Joint Submission to the consultations on the draft Federal Sustainable Development Strategy:
Canada cannot achieve sustainable development with
costly, carbon-intensive militarism and rising military spending**

We, the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace (VOW) and the Women's International League for Peace & Freedom Canada (WILPF), are gravely concerned that since Canada endorsed the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, it has drastically increased military spending diverting public resources away from achieving the 17 SDGs. On most indicators, the federal government has not made adequate progress and poverty and climate change have become much worse across the country. The problem of rising military spending and the importance of peace to sustainable development is overlooked in Canada's current draft *2026-2029 Federal Sustainable Development Strategy*.

As the graphic below from the federal budget shows, Canada's military spending was \$18 billion in 2015 and \$44 billion in 2025. This year, military spending will soar to \$63 billion. According to



NATO's latest *Defence Expenditures* report, Canada is currently 6th highest for military spending among allies. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's *Trends on World Military Expenditures* ranked Canada 16th highest in the world for military spending. As Canada's military spending has risen, so too has poverty (SDG 1) and carbon emissions (SDG 13) as explained by the National Advisory Council on

From: Budget 2024: budget.canada.ca

Poverty and the Canadian Climate Institute respectively.

Worse still, the federal government has announced that it will further increase military spending to \$150 billion/year by 2035 to reach NATO's 5% GDP target. The negative impacts on Canada's ability to achieve sustainable development while military spending continues to rise over the next decade is ignored in the draft strategy. The federal government cannot eliminate poverty (SDG 1) and hunger (SDG 2) and protect the environment and climate (SDGs 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, 15) while boosting the military budget.

In regard to SDG 13, *Climate Action*, we would like to point out that the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces are the largest consumers of fossil fuels in the federal government and the biggest emitters of CO₂, accounting for over 60% of federal carbon emissions. The government's planned procurement of new fossil fuel-powered fighter jets, armoured vehicles, armed drones, missile launchers, and warships to "Re-build, re-arm and re-invest in the Canadian Armed Forces" will worsen climate change and risk global conflict undermining SDGs 13 and 16. Moreover, these weapons systems will degrade the environment (SDGs 14 and 15). We note that the Federal Commissioner of Environment and Sustainable Development and the Canadian Climate Institute have reported that Canada has failed to meet every target under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change for the past thirty years and is not on track to halve emissions under the Paris Agreement by 2030. Military emissions are a crucial reason Canada is failing to reduce its climate impacts, but the issue of demilitarization for decarbonization is not part of the draft strategy.

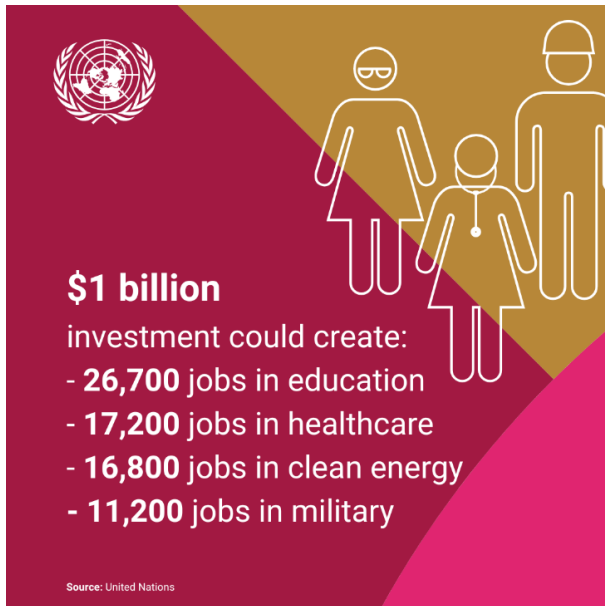
We want to bring to your attention this important United Nations' report that was released last September as it relates to sustainable development: "[*The Security We Need: Rebalancing Military Spending for a Sustainable and Peaceful Future*](#)." The report cautions, "At this critical juncture, the international community must confront the stark reality that rising military expenditures are not yielding greater peace. Instead, they are undermining our shared vision for development and a sustainable future." This criticism applies to Canada as military spending continues to increase and the federal government has introduced a Defence Industrial Strategy that undermines SDG 9 on Innovation, Industry and Infrastructure.

The UN report also urged member states including Canada to reconceive security based on human needs, not militarism. It also showed that more jobs could be created in the care economy than the military (see graphic below). The report made the following important observations on military spending and gender inequality, which relates to SDGs 3 and 5:

- "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."

These points show that higher military spending makes the lives of women and girls more insecure, not sustainable.

As well, the UN report 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.” These issues have not been addressed in the current draft strategy on climate change (SDG 13).



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>

Military spending represents an opportunity cost and trade-off of **not** spending on federal programs that help Canadians, expand the green, care economy, and achieve sustainable development.

This problem of rising military spending and the important requirement of peace for sustainable development are overlooked in the federal government’s draft strategy.

Therefore, we are recommending that the government revise the draft strategy and deal directly with the impacts of rising military spending on Canada’s ability to implement sustainable development and how costly, carbon-intensive militarism affects the 17 SDGs. We also recommend that women’s equality (SDG 5) and peace (SDG 16) be centred in the federal government’s strategy for sustainable development. Finally, we endorse the Basic Income Guarantee (BIG) proposal and the

recommendations of the *National Advisory Council on Poverty’s 2025 report* and the *People’s Report Canada’s Implementation of Social Development Commitments 1995-2025*, which call for BIG and more investments in housing and mental health care to eliminate poverty in the country. BIG for every Canadian, adapting communities to climate change, and achieving sustainable development are only possible by cutting military spending and stopping carbon-intensive militarism.

Sources:

NATO Defence Expenditures Report:

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

The Canadian Climate Institute’s independent assessment of the 2025 Progress Report on the 2030 Emissions Reduction Plan (2026): <https://climateinstitute.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Climate-Institute-440-Megatonnes-Independent-Assessment-2026-2025-Progress-Report-2030-Emissions-Reduction-Plan.pdf>

The 2025 Report of the National Advisory Council on Poverty:

https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/esdc-edsc/documents/programs/poverty-reduction/national-advisory-council/reports/2025-annual/NACP_2025_Annual_Report-EN.pdf

United Nations, (2025) The Security We Need: Rebalancing Military Spending for a Sustainable and Peaceful Future: https://front.un-arm.org/Milex-SDG-Study/SG_Report_TheSecurityWeNeed.pdf

WSSD2 PEOPLE'S REPORT CANADA'S IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITMENTS 1995-2025 (2025):

<https://www.yorku.ca/unescochair/wp-content/uploads/sites/655/2025/12/Canada-Peoples-Report-2025.pdf>

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: wilpfcanda.ca