



Regional Council

House of Commons Background Guide

Honourable Member of Parliament,

My name is Liam Murtagh, and it is my privilege to welcome you to the House of Commons at SMUSMUN 2025. Having participated in high-level House of Commons committees, This committee has been a defining experience in my high school Model United Nations journey. For those of you who are new to Canadian politics, this committee offers an excellent opportunity to learn more about the political process, and it may even spark a new passion for you.

This year, Members of Parliament will have the weighty responsibility of drafting and debating legislation that will shape the future of Canadian defence spending. The decisions made within this chamber will not only dictate the strength and readiness of the Canadian Armed Forces but will also define the nation's role on the world stage for years to come. At stake is more than just a budget—it is the security of the nation, the integrity of its alliances, and Canada's ability to respond to an increasingly uncertain global landscape. As tensions rise in key geopolitical arenas and new threats emerge in cyber warfare, Arctic sovereignty, and international conflicts, Parliament's choices will have far-reaching implications. The final bill passed by this committee could determine Canada's commitment to NATO, its role in global peacekeeping missions, and its strategic partnerships for generations. In this defining moment, Members must weigh the risks of underfunding national defence against the financial and ethical burdens of military expansion, knowing that the consequences of their decisions may echo far beyond their tenure.

I strongly encourage all delegates to prepare by reviewing the Standing Orders and watching clips of real House of Commons debates to familiarize themselves with the structure and tone of parliamentary discussion. Parliamentary procedure will be reviewed on the first day, and all dais members will be available to assist with any questions that arise during debate. Regardless of your prior experience with Canadian politics, I urge you to approach this committee with an open mind. The room will be filled with delegates of all experience levels, and a collaborative approach will lead to a productive and engaging weekend of debate.

I am honoured to work alongside your Deputy Speakers, Liam Pope-Lau, as well as Luc Denux. I hope you find value in your preparations, and I look forward to meeting you all at the start of April. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at liam.murtaghe@smus.ca

Best regards,
Liam Murtagh
Speaker, House of Commons, SMUSMUN 2025

Honourable Members of Parliament,

As representatives of the people, you are tasked with one of the most pressing and consequential debates of our time—the future of Canada’s defence spending. This discussion extends far beyond mere fiscal considerations; it is a fundamental question of national security, international standing, and the long-term strategic direction of our country. In an era defined by shifting geopolitical tensions, rapid technological advancements, and evolving military threats, Canada must decide how best to safeguard its sovereignty and fulfill its global commitments.

Throughout history, our nation has faced moments of reckoning when it comes to military investment. From the World Wars to the Cold War, from peacekeeping to counterterrorism, Canada has had to navigate the complexities of defence spending with careful consideration of both necessity and restraint. Now, as new threats emerge—ranging from cyber warfare to Arctic security—the decisions made in this committee will shape our nation’s military capabilities and global influence for generations to come.

The Members of this House must grapple with critical questions: Are we doing enough to ensure the safety and preparedness of the Canadian Armed Forces? How do we maintain our commitments to NATO and NORAD while balancing domestic priorities? Should Canada expand its defence investments, or should we seek alternative strategies such as diplomacy and technological innovation to secure our future? These are not simple questions, nor are the answers without controversy.

As you engage in debate, remember that every dollar allocated to defence is a dollar not spent elsewhere. The weight of your decisions will be felt not only within Parliament but across the country and beyond our borders. This is your opportunity to shape the policies that will determine Canada’s role in an unpredictable world.

With that in mind, I urge each of you to approach this debate with diligence, open-mindedness, and a commitment to constructive discourse. The future of Canadian defence—and the legacy of this Parliament—rests in your hands.

Liam Pope-Lau

Deputy Speaker, House of Commons, VMUN 2025

Position Paper Policy

A position paper is a brief overview of a country's stance on the topics being discussed by a particular committee. Though there is no specific format the position paper must follow, it should include a description of the positions your country holds on the issues on the agenda, relevant actions that your country has taken, and potential solutions that your country would support.

At St. Michaels University School Model United Nations, delegates should write a position paper for the committee's topic. The position paper should not exceed one page and should all be combined into a single document per delegate. For DISEC, position papers, although strongly recommended, are not required. However, delegates who wish to be considered for an award must submit position papers.

Formatting

Position papers should:

- Include the name of the delegate, his/her country, and the committee
- Be in a standard font (e.g. Times New Roman) with a 12-point font size and 1-inch document margins
- Not include illustrations, diagrams, decorations, national symbols, watermarks, or page borders
- Include citations and a bibliography, in any format, giving due credit to the sources used in research (not included in the 1-page limit)

Due Dates and Submission Procedure

Position papers for this committee must be submitted by April 2nd, 2025, at 23:59 PST. Once your position paper is complete, please save the file as "your last name, your first name" and send it as an attachment in an email to your committee's email address, with the subject heading as "[last name] [first name] — Position Paper". Please do not add any other attachments to the email. Please have your position paper in PDF form or as a Word document file; position papers submitted in another format will not be accepted. Each position paper will be manually reviewed and considered for the Best Position Paper award. Position papers should be sent to liam.murtagh@smus.ca

Canadian defense spending has been the cause of numerous controversies, which have reflected deep political, moral, and economic cleavages. Perhaps the most long-standing controversy concerns the size and scope of Canada's defense budget. Detractors say that increasing defense spending diverts essential funds away from health care, education, and infrastructure, while others believe that increased military spending is required to advance national security and global commitments.

Transparency in arms procurement is another controversial issue. Big, high-visibility defense contracts, including the purchasing of fighter jets and warships, have been tainted by cost overruns, delays, and allegations of mismanagement. Canadians question if public money is being spent wisely, and if the defense industry is being given too much sway in government policy.

Ethical concerns also play a pivotal role in discussions of defense spending. Canadian participation in arms sales, particularly to human rights-violating states, has incited demonstrations and public outcry. Additionally, the militarization of Canadian foreign policy and engagement in foreign wars raise questions regarding whether Canada is following ideals of peacekeeping or merely winning strategic alliances at the expense of diplomatic solutions.

The changing character of war introduces an added dimension of controversy. Some experts propose that traditional military spending—tanks, planes, and navies—is less important with the specter of cyber attacks, drone warfare, and artificial intelligence-driven conflict. Others counter that failing to update conventional forces may leave Canada vulnerable at a time of geopolitical insecurity.

Public opinion is highly polarized on these issues, often echoing broader ideological perspectives of military intervention, government duty, and international responsibility. These controversies make defense spending one of the most controversial aspects of Canadian politics, and any legislative changes will be met with significant attention and controversy.

Current State of the Canadian Armed Forces:

Context:

Canada's military faces significant challenges related to outdated equipment, low recruitment, and inadequate defence spending. These issues have a substantial impact on the country's operational effectiveness and its ability to meet NATO commitments.

Canada faces several challenges in addressing its military deficiencies, with various political parties and experts proposing different solutions. The most direct approach, supported by the Conservative Party and cautiously endorsed by the Liberal Party, is to significantly increase defence spending to meet NATO's 2% GDP target. However, this solution faces obstacles such as fiscal constraints, potential public opposition, and challenges in efficiently allocating sudden large funding increases.

Modernizing equipment and systems is another crucial strategy, with projects like the Joint Fires Modernization and CF Land Electronic Warfare Modernization in the pipeline, though these initiatives often encounter high costs, long lead times, and potential procurement delays. To address recruitment issues, the Canadian Armed Forces is overhauling its processes, including expediting security clearances and digitizing applications, but this raises concerns about maintaining standards and security.

Some experts, aligned with New Democratic Party thinking, suggest focusing on niche capabilities that match Canada's strengths, although this could limit the military's versatility. Strengthening international partnerships and domestic defence industry investment are also considered, with broad political support, but these approaches come with their own drawbacks in terms of autonomy and costs. Ultimately, addressing Canada's military challenges will require a balanced approach, weighing immediate needs against long-term capability development and fiscal realities, while maintaining public and political support for strengthening the country's defence capabilities.

Equipment Obsolescence

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) are grappling with aging and increasingly obsolete fleets, which are affecting their readiness and operational capabilities. The Department of National Defence (DND) has warned that the availability of military equipment is declining. This issue is particularly acute for the navy and army, where the percentage of equipment ready for training and operations has decreased.

For the Air Force, the transition from legacy platforms to new capabilities is ongoing but is hampered by a limited number of qualified technicians. The age and "fragility" of major equipment, such as frigates and jet fighters, require more maintenance, which directly impacts operational impact.

Recruitment and Training Challenges

The CAF is facing a severe recruitment crisis, described by Defence Minister Bill Blair as a "death spiral". As of August 2024, the military had 92,798 people in uniform out of an authorized strength of 101,500. The recruitment process is plagued by bureaucratic inefficiency, with long delays in security clearances and medical screenings discouraging potential recruits. Moreover, the CAF is struggling with a training bottleneck. Gen. Jennie Carignan, the chief of the defence staff, testified that the Armed Forces only has the capacity to put 6,400 recruits through basic training each year. This limitation significantly impacts the military's ability to grow and address its personnel shortages.

NATO Spending Commitment

Canada has consistently fallen short of NATO's 2% GDP defence spending target. As of 2024, Canada's defence spending was projected to reach only 1.37% of its GDP. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has committed to meeting the 2% target by 2032, but this timeline has been criticized as too slow by some NATO allies.

To reach the 2% target, Canada's defence expenditures would need to nearly double from \$41 billion in 2024-25 to \$81.9 billion by 2032-33. This significant increase requires a rapid escalation in expenditures, particularly after 2029-30.

Implications and Debates

These issues have sparked debates about Canada's military readiness and its ability to meet international commitments. Some view the NATO spending target as wasteful, while others see it as necessary for Canada's role in global security. The situation raises important questions about how future spending should be allocated and what priorities should be set for modernizing the CAF.

The challenges facing Canada's military are multifaceted and interconnected. Addressing them will require significant investment, strategic planning, and political will to modernize equipment, streamline recruitment and training processes, and meet international defence spending commitments.

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