



BRIEFING: Defence Consultations – London, Ontario

July 30, 2016

The Honourable Harjit Sajjan
Minister of Defence
Member of Parliament, Vancouver South

Dear Minister Sajjan,

In mid-July, my office organized two defence consultations. The first brought together defence industry leaders representing six firms based in London, Ontario. In order to ensure participants felt comfortable to put forward their perspectives in a frank manner, the meeting was kept private. Members of the public were able to express their views in a separate meeting. Both gatherings proved to be interesting, engaging and productive.

In what follows, please find a concise overview of the most crucial points that were raised from both discussions.

Consultation with defence industry leaders:

As you know, the defence industry plays an important role in London's local economy by helping to sustain well-paying jobs and contributing to a burgeoning advanced manufacturing sector. This is why I wanted to include individuals from this sector in a consultation. Each appreciated this and your decision to facilitate an open dialogue on defence issues. The main points emphasized in this consultation were:

- That Canada ought to spend two percent of its gross domestic product on defence annually.
- A Canadian defence industrial policy would make our country more secure while providing a strong economic stimulus. Yet, we are failing to purchase products made by Canadian defence firms. This, in turn, makes it much more difficult to access overseas opportunities because it implies that the Canadian government lacks confidence in its defence sector.
- Part of the problem that governments confront in attempting to pursue a defence industrial policy is winning public support. Framing the matter so that the wider spin-off benefits are understood can help in this regard. For instance, the technology used for defence purposes can also be used in an entirely different way that carries important social benefits (e.g. e-health). The public is also more likely to support this type of spending if the economic benefits of the intellectual property of the technology that is being developed are emphasized.
- A whole of government approach is needed if global market opportunities are to be accessed by the Canadian defence sector. This would involve the Canadian Commercial Corporation, Global Affairs Canada (Foreign Affairs and International Trade) and Innovation, Science and Economic



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Development working in concert with the defence industry to identify possibilities.

- Government support for the cyber security sector is vital. One firm in the consultation reported that it is forced to deal with 300-500 attacks on a daily basis. Canadian firms specializing in this field are global leaders and are well-positioned to provide necessary support.

While many of the arguments raised in this consultation could be considered self-serving on the part of those who attended, I still believe they merit serious consideration because they were put forward on the basis of good faith. In particular, I was stunned to learn about the cyber security challenges the defence sector faces. Indeed, of all the arguments put forward, it is this point that I took to be the most critical.

Consultation with members of the public:

Individuals who attended this consultation included former veterans, veteran advocates and academics. The key points that were underlined are:

- The capability gap that you have spoken about is preventing Canada from combating threats. The threats mentioned emphasized terrorism and fears about Russian belligerence.
- Professor Jonathan Vance, a Western University military historian, argued that Canada would be better off partnering with allies that already have a strong fighter aircraft capability rather than purchasing new aircrafts. Doing so would allow Canada to focus on what we already do well (i.e. peacekeeping and peace enforcement). This was a contentious point but one that did interest many in the room.
- Canada needs to continue to be a leader in promoting the Women, Peace and Security agenda of the United Nations. The contributions made by the Department of National Defence in this regard ought to be continued and strengthened.
- Cyber security was described by one attendee as “the new frontier” that requires immediate and continued attention. I found it important that there is general support for this view among defence companies and citizens.
- Canada lacks a strategy to attract and retain reservist forces. Moreover, processing times for new recruits is too long. This is a problem that could be combated by increasing the funding devoted for these purposes. This point is especially important in light of the fact that reservists made up twenty percent of our forces in Afghanistan and forty percent in Bosnia.
- Reservists can play an important role in peacekeeping operations because they have not been immersed in a military culture. Their ability to gain the trust of local populations is therefore stronger than that of regular personnel, at least according to several of those who attended. Using reservists in such operations would also help cut down on the costs associated with peace operations while allowing Canada to fulfill its obligations to the international community in a way that matches with



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our traditional values. It should be noted that while many agreed with this point, there was a view that reservists could not simply be sent into peace operations without strong combat training that would help prepare them for the unpredictable circumstances they would almost certainly encounter.

Thank you for being supportive of this process and for empowering Members of Parliament to discuss defence issues with their constituents. I genuinely enjoyed the opportunity to reach out in this way and on such an important subject. Should you wish to discuss anything raised in this report, please feel free to contact me whenever it is convenient.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Peter Fragiskatos".

Peter Fragiskatos
Member of Parliament (MP)
London North Centre