

Our mission has a number of objectives.

First, to stabilize the Afghan nation, ravaged by decades of war and tyranny.

We are working to strengthen the democratic regime and ensure that the country does not fall back into the hands of terrorists.

We are accomplishing this goal in a variety of ways.

First, by helping to train over 30,000 Afghan National Army soldiers.

More than 60 Canadian instructors are also training Afghan police officers.

Security in that country will not be truly consolidated in the medium term until Afghans themselves can provide it.

And that is what we are helping them do.

Canada has also helped train dozens of judges and lawyers so a credible and effective judicial system can be put in place.

Without such a system, justice and basic human rights will continue to be ignored in Afghanistan.

The second major purpose of the Canadian mission is a humanitarian one.

The list of what has been accomplished thanks to Canadian assistance is so long that I cannot possibly mention everything.

Canada's development efforts in Kandahar are making a difference in critical areas like health, education and community development.

Tens of thousands of Kandaharis are seeing tangible improvements to their daily lives.

Today, more than 80 percent of Afghan citizens have access to health care, up from only 9 percent five years ago. This is progress by any measure.

In Kandahar province, 350,000 children have been vaccinated against polio. Canadian assistance has helped set up an obstetrics unit in Kandahar's hospital.

Canada has helped set up 4,000 schools and train 9,000 teachers.

This will benefit 120,000 children, more than 85 percent of them girls. In Kandahar itself, several thousand adults have learned to read and write because of Canadian aid.