

Current Canadian Position

In announcing the contract for the icebreaker Mr. Clark stated:

...we must take appropriate steps to strengthen our actual control over the waters of the Arctic archipelago. Building an Arctic Class 8 icebreaker is a major step towards attaining this goal....We will be able to provide both for safe navigation and compliance with our laws throughout our Arctic waters.¹

The Minister of National Defence, Perrin Beatty, outlined the rationale for the new procurement programmes during his statement before the House on the White Paper. Mr. Beatty pointed out that Canadian forces are unable to adequately meet their commitments and that this has created a "commitment-capability" gap. He stated:

This gap is widening as ships, aircraft, vehicles and equipment become obsolete before they can be replaced. If this trend were allowed to continue, the Canadian Forces would rust out.²

Mr. Beatty said that the acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines, new frigates, and new minesweepers was part of a strategy to develop a three-ocean navy. He stated:

The naval vessels we are planning to acquire will be delivered through the next decade and beyond and will last, and represent Canada's naval capability, well into the next century....The issue is not the cost of a particular type of vessel but rather the cost of replacing a navy on the verge of rust-out. The real question is whether Canada can afford to have a modern navy....³

¹ Commons Debates, 2 Mar. 1987, p. 3723.

² Commons Debates, 5 Jun. 1987, p. 6776.

³ Ibid., p. 6777.