

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

1. Canada faces major defence decisions

Canada continues to face major defence decisions. The government has to continue grappling with reconstruction of the nation's defences and such problems as rebuilding continental aerospace defences, the continuation of NORAD, and President Reagan's Strategic Defence Initiative, while also endeavouring to protect its own sovereignty, play an effective role in NATO and contribute to the achievement of international peace and security.

New tanks, long-range patrol aircraft, interceptors, patrol frigates and other equipment have already been purchased or ordered, but there is still shortage and obsolescence in many areas which must be acknowledged and tackled as soon as possible. This will require increases in the defence budget unless the number of defence commitments is significantly reduced.

The Committee has said all this before. It has been calling for a new white paper since it began its work in 1980. The Honourable Harvie Andre, Associate Minister of National Defence, informed the Committee on 24 October 1985 that such a statement could be expected in a few months.

Over the past five years, the Committee has tabled reports on armed forces' manpower, Canada's maritime defence and Canada's territorial air defence. It turned, at the outset of this year, to a consideration of military air transport, a vital part of the forces' essential supply system. Reports on Canada-U.S. co-operation in the defence of North America and Canada's international relations are being prepared in other parliamentary bodies. Like them, this study on military air transport attempts to contribute to the development of effective Canadian foreign and defence policies for the remainder of this century. Military air transport is an essential element of both our commitments to our allies and our own territorial defence.

2. The importance of military air transport

The sheer size of Canada dictates that the armed forces must depend heavily on military air transport. This country is spread over more than 9 million square kilometers of land and almost as much of territorial seas and maritime economic zones, and maintains military installations from the Atlantic to the Pacific and as far North as Alert on Ellesmere Island. The first paved transcontinental highway across the southern parts of Canada was not completed until 1970, and even now