

Those who are most favourable towards SDI tend to regard it as technologically feasible, tend more than opponents to believe development of the system will either have no effect on the nuclear arms race or will actually slow down that race, and support Canadian involvement on both the research and deployment phases of the project. Notably, those who are favourable to SDI but less strongly so tend more to support Canadian participation in the research phase only. Consistent with these views, proponents tend to explain their support of SDI development in terms of the need to provide "defence", "protection" or "security" against nuclear missiles. Those who are unfavourable toward SDI in general tend more than its proponents to believe it unlikely such a system could be built and be effective, tend strongly to expect its development to speed up the nuclear arms race, and reject any Canadian involvement. Most opponents explain their negative position on the grounds that the US attempt to develop a strategic defence system will "escalate the threat of nuclear war" and lead to an increase rather than a reduction in nuclear weapons. Other opponents point to the system's high costs and its likely ineffectiveness.

The intensity of interest group opposition to Canadian involvement in SDI was evident at the summer 1985 hearings of the Special Parliamentary committee. The intensity of public opposition may be reflected in the pattern of responses in the July 1985 Decima survey to two questions - the one concerning the preferred nature, if any, of Canadian involvement in the SDI project (participation in research and deployment, in research but not building, or no participation) and another, follow-up question in which respondents were asked a more complex variant: "Some people say that if the Star Wars system is going to be built anyway we may as well participate so that we at least get some economic and technological benefits out of it." As might be expected, virtually all supporters of Canadian participation in both SDI research and deployment agreed with this view. Most (75%) of those opposed to any Canadian participation disagreed.