

### CURRENT CANADIAN POSITION

On 31 October 1988, in a speech at McMaster University, External Affairs Minister Joe Clark outlined the rationale for Canadian membership in NATO:

We are in NATO because a strong North Atlantic alliance serves the best interests of Canada. Obviously, the world has changed enormously since that western alliance was first put into place. But many of the conditions which led to the creation of NATO are the same today as they were in 1949. Europe is still divided between societies that are free and societies that are not. Canada is still vitally interested in protecting freedom, and advancing it, in Europe. The alliance across the Atlantic is still a powerful instrument to resist American instincts to isolation, and to encourage American co-operation within Europe, and co-operation by Europe with North America.... One thing that has changed is the direct threat to Canada is more terrible now, with strategic missiles. We are in the path between the superpowers. Changing our policy does not change our geography and, since we can't wish missiles away, we owe it to our own safety to maintain institutions which control them, or which bring their numbers down.<sup>15</sup>

The Minister added that, given Canada's immense landmass and its location, any attempt to defend and protect it, independent of others, would entail unbearable financial costs.<sup>16</sup>

In December 1988, a report on "burden-sharing" by NATO's Defence Planning Committee identified the percentage of gross domestic product Canada devoted to defence--2.17 percent--as being among the lowest in the Alliance.<sup>17</sup> Although the document also praised Canada's planned improvements in its NATO commitments as outlined in the 1987 Defence White Paper, and acknowledged its financial contributions as being among the highest in NATO, it cited Canada as one ally that should contribute more to the common defence.

The then Defence Minister Perrin Beatty acknowledged that the report was generally accurate regarding Canada's role in NATO. However, he added that the European Allies should be more sensitive to Canada's defence activities in North America. "NATO," Mr. Beatty stated, "...tends to measure what you do in Europe. Our position is that you should see the integrated whole.... NATO is a transatlantic alliance."<sup>18</sup> Additional comment on the NATO report came from Robert Fowler, the then Assistant Deputy Minister for Policy in the Department of National Defence. While Mr. Fowler conceded

<sup>15</sup> Department of External Affairs, *Statements and Speeches* (31 October 1988), p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> See: *Enhancing Alliance Security: Shared Risks and Responsibilities Within the Alliance; A Report by NATO's Defence Planning Committee*. December 1988.

<sup>18</sup> "Beatty: NATO Doesn't Grasp How Much Canada Gives." *Montreal Gazette*, 2 December 1988, p. A7.