

The issue receiving the most attention, as a result of the defence budget, was the closing and reduction of bases in Canada. Members from both opposition parties questioned the rationale and need for these measures, especially in regard to the bases in Summerside, PEI and Portage La Prairie, Manitoba. Liberal Member Bob Kaplan raised the issue of whether various alternatives to closing bases in economically needy areas were considered.

It was noted that the closure of CFB Summerside represented a reduction of 3034 jobs, or 5.39 percent of total jobs in PEI.⁸

Members referred to statements in the 1987 Defence White Paper that defence spending was an important method of enhancing regional economic development. In light of these statements, both the fairness and the rationale of the base closures were questioned. In response, Mr. McKnight stated:

The people who have the ability and the requirement of the service and a commitment to this country, the men and women who serve in the military today...deserve more from the people of Canada than to be located in regions for economic development. What they deserve is the ability as Canadians to share the load in getting the debt down.

By restructuring the military, we hope to be able to bring into proportion the Operations and Maintenance and the personnel in order that we can provide the equipment necessary for the men and women who serve all Canadians.⁹

On another occasion Mr. McKnight explained that many bases in Canada existed because the size of the Canadian Forces used to be larger. As fewer military personnel are now in the Canadian Forces, fewer facilities are needed: "The simple fact is that those bases were opened when they were needed. When they are no longer needed because of changes in technology, resources and priorities, then the need to close them is as apparent as the need was to open them."¹⁰

Liberal Member Joe McGuire questioned the Government over a commitment made in 1980 by Defence Minister Gilles Lamontagne, that each province in Canada would have at least one regular forces base. As CFB Summerside is the only military base in PEI, he asked what had happened to that commitment. Jean-Guy Hudon, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, replied:

Most of Canada's fleet of Tracker aircraft operate out of CFB Summerside along with a search and rescue squadron. The Trackers are now over 30 years old. Maintenance has become extremely costly and difficult.

By 1992...these aircraft will need to be re-engined to keep them flying. As well, the fuel they require aircraft will be obsolete.

⁸ *Commons Debates*, 16 May 1989, p. 1835.

⁹ *Commons Debates*, 5 May 1989, p. 1368.

¹⁰ *Commons Debates*, 11 May 1989, p. 1585.