

“Still a War Budget!” Canadian Peace Alliance Statement on Federal Budget 2013

Written by Joan Russow

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By [Canadian Peace Alliance: “Still a War Budget!”](#)

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The Leaky Department of National Defence

March 21, 2013

For the third year in a row, a document has been “[leaked](#)” to the press warning of cuts to military spending just as the federal budget is due to be released.

The reality is the Conservatives have overseen billions in additional spending on the Canadian forces. When they came into office in 2006, spending on the military was \$15 billion. Even with the proposed reductions, they are due to spend roughly \$19 billion each year.

That extra \$4 billion is enough to provide free post-secondary tuition for all Canadian students. It would also be enough to provide adequate housing for all Canadians living on the streets or to hire almost 40,000 nurses. Harper wants to fund war instead.

For a Conservative government that is known to have a tight leash on all federal departments, these continued leaks must be disconcerting. In 2012, a [leaked letter](#) from the Prime Minister to Peter Mackay called for more cuts to the DND budget. In 2011, [another leak](#) – this time of a report by Lieutenant-General Andrew Leslie – caused a stir by calling for \$1 billion in cuts.

Ironically, it seems the Department of National Defence has a serious security problem.

That may be the case, but the consistency of the leaks does make one wonder if there is another motive for the Harper government. Given that a [huge majority of Canadians believe that we should cut money from the military](#) before cutting social and environmental programs, it seems more likely that the Conservatives are using these leaks to try and soften the blow of other cuts to come. Evidently they want to highlight the fact that everyone is tightening their belts – before they ask us to tighten them again.

We all know how gung-ho this Prime Minister is. He has re-branded the Canadian forces as the Canadian *Armed* forces so we don't forget that they are there to, “kill detestable murderers and scumbags” in the words of Former Defence Chief Rick Hillier, even if its main victims in Afghanistan turned out to be unarmed civilian men, women and children. They have worked hard to make Canadians proud of our military, spending millions on the War of 1812 events and have even re-written the new Citizens handbook to highlight Canada's military history.

Harper is also the most vocal cheerleader for an attack on Iran and has never shied away from deploying the Canadian forces whether in Libya, Afghanistan or now Mali. This government has also called for Canada to open up 8 new military bases abroad and had earmarked almost a half trillion dollars in military spending in the Canada First Defence Strategy (CFDS). In the first 5 years as Prime Minister, Harper increased the military budget by \$1 billion each year. Just recently, Harper announced that Canada intends to spend another \$1 billion on an armed drone program.

The cuts as outlined will reduce the total amount earmarked for the military but it hardly suggests a department that is in trouble financially. The military is still the largest discretionary item in the budget. If we add up all the reductions as outlined in the myriad of leaked reports we are looking at a total allotment for the time frame outlined by the CFDS of approximately \$450 billion by 2025.

No matter how you cut it, this is still a war budget.

(The Canadian Peace Alliance was formed in 1985 and is the largest umbrella group for peace organizations in Canada. The Canadian Peace Congress is a founding member of the CPA.)

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