A Liberal government will take immediate action to ensure that Canada’s Armed Forces have the equipment they need – and the support they require – to protect Canada and its sovereignty, while also growing local economies and creating jobs.

As the world grows more complex and interconnected, what happens outside our borders has become increasingly important in the lives of Canadians. Our security, prosperity, and well-being will depend on how we navigate this period of global change. An important element of Canada’s history – and our continued engagement with the world – is our military capabilities and contributions: to the defence of Canada, to the defence of North America, to United Nations peace operations, to disaster relief, and when necessary, to combat missions. Above all, the brave members of today’s Canadian Armed Forces offer their service to protect Canada and its sovereignty.

Following years of neglect by Stephen Harper, the Forces are in a state of stagnation. After a heroic, ten-year engagement in Afghanistan, very little has been done to prepare the Forces for its post-Afghanistan future. The Harper Conservatives have provided little vision, plan, or needed cultural changes. Funding has been erratic, promised increases to the military have been scaled back, and over $10 billion of funding – allocated by Parliament to our military – has been left unspent.

Defence procurement is paralyzed, with major projects constantly delayed – from the replacement of Canada’s CF-18s, to needed Army trucks, to multiple naval vessel projects. The result has been equipment breakdowns, greater risks to the safety of our men and women in uniform, and a failure to create jobs and economic growth in Canada’s world-class manufacturing industries. In a recent study in the Canadian Naval Review, it was determined that our navy ranks below Bangladesh in terms of capabilities, and can no longer be considered a “blue water” navy.

Training and readiness have been dramatically reduced across all lines of service, spare parts are lacking, and little has happened on transformation initiatives to reduce overhead so that new investments can be made in readiness. Meanwhile, not nearly enough has been done to support members of the Canadian Armed Forces, whether through mental health services or eliminating an inappropriate culture of sexual harassment. These issues must be addressed.

Our military is too important for Harper’s record of failure to continue. To ensure the defence of Canada, while also making a meaningful contribution to interna-
tional peace and security, we need real change.

- A Liberal government will maintain current National Defence spending levels, including current planned increases.

- The Canada First Defence Strategy is underfunded and out of date. We will immediately begin an open and transparent review process to create a new Defence White Paper that will replace Harper’s failed Canada First Defence Strategy. Key priorities of a Liberal government will include:

  - Developing the Canadian Armed Forces into an effective, agile, responsive, and well-equipped military force that can appropriately respond to a spectrum of operations within a whole of government context. These include: defence of Canada, defence of North America, support during natural disasters, international deterrence, humanitarian support missions, peace operations, and combat capability.

  - Collaborating with the United States in the defence of North America under NORAD and contributing to regional collective defence within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

  - Ensuring that all equipment acquisitions operate with vastly improved timelines and vigorous Parliamentary oversight, while providing the necessary, decisive, involved, and accountable Cabinet leadership to drive major programs to a timely and successful conclusion.

  - Renewing focus on surveillance and control of Canadian territory and approaches, particularly our Arctic regions, including an increase in the size of the Canadian Rangers.

- Supporting international peace and security operations, as well as humanitarian support missions with the United Nations or regional partners, on a case-by-case basis.

- Assisting in domestic security and natural disaster responses, both national and international.

- Increasing the capacities of regional and local partners to prevent the spread of terrorism and radicalization by vastly increased training assistance missions. To facilitate this partnership we will also increase the potential of partner foreign military students attending Canadian academic and training institutions.

- Conducting a thorough review of existing measures to protect Canadians and critical infrastructure from cyber-threats.

- Prioritizing the well-being of Canadian Armed Forces members while in service, including a zero-tolerance policy for sexual harassment, adequate mental health support services, and high quality career counselling and support.

- As a key procurement priority, we will fast track and expand the capital renewal of the Royal Canadian Navy. Additional ship requirements identified through our review will be funded by choosing to replace the existing CF-18s with a more affordable aircraft than the F-35s, which will be procured through an open process. We will also launch enhanced ice breakers, as well as new surface combatants. This commitment will ensure that the Royal Canadian Navy is able to operate as a blue water fleet well into the future.

In addition to replacing the CF-18s and re-equipment the Royal Canadian Navy, top equipment priorities will
include acquiring cost effective search and rescue aircraft, long range surveillance UAVs, and finalizing a variety of Army projects.

- **We will not purchase the F-35 stealth fighter-bomber.** The primary mission of our fighter aircraft will remain the defence of North America. We will immediately launch an open and transparent competition to replace the CF-18 that will exclude requirements that do not reflect Canada’s interests, such as first-strike stealth capabilities. We will reduce the financial procurement envelope for replacing the CF-18s. Instead of budgeting for the acquisition of 65 F-35s, we will plan to purchase an equal or greater number of lower priced, but equally effective, replacement aircraft.

At an 80 cent dollar, the per unit fly away cost of each F-35 is $175 million, and the sustainment costs of each plane will be $270 million – given that repair work must largely be undertaken in the United States.

Alternatively, the Super Hornet’s reported fly away price is around $65 million at an 80 cent dollar, and a large amount of the sustainment activity can be undertaken here at home, creating good jobs for Canadians. The Super Hornet is merely used as an illustration of cost savings and is not indicative of which aircraft would win a truly open and transparent competition.

In addition, an open procurement process will ensure that bids include guaranteed industrial benefits for Canadian companies, typically at a rate of $1 for $1. By contrast, the Conservative sole source approach does not guarantee a single contract for Canadian companies.

- **We will implement the recommendations made in the Canadian Forces’ report on Transformation,** so that our Forces can have "more teeth and less tail." We will reduce the size of administration within the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces.

- **While reducing some administration, we will increase the capacity of National Defence’s acquisition branch to ensure that major projects avoid the bottle-necks that have plagued our Armed Forces under Stephen Harper.**

- **We will not lapse military funding from year to year, and we will re-invest in building a leaner, more agile, better equipped military.** This will also include ensuring adequate support systems for military personnel and their families.

- **As already announced, we will end Canada’s combat mission in Iraq.** We will re-focus Canada’s military contribution in the region on the training of local forces, while providing more humanitarian support and immediately welcoming 25,000 Syrian refugees to Canada.

- **We will remain firmly committed to operations REASSURANCE and UNIFER in Central and Eastern Europe.**

- **As already announced, a Liberal government will make new and significant investments to meet the sacred obligation that we have to our veterans.** These measures include: restoring life-long pensions for wounded soldiers, enhanced support measures, and better education and training opportunities.