

Reserves 2000 reacts to Conservative Leader Stephen Harper's plan to expand Canada's Reserve Forces

Coalition of Reserve Forces supporters cautiously optimistic about plan; eager to see proposals from NDP and Liberal leaders

For immediate release.

August 25, 2015

Toronto, ON – [Reserves 2000](#), a coalition of Canadians committed to sustaining Canada's Army Reserve soldiers and 250 units or sub-units located across the country, has responded to Conservative Leader Stephen Harper's August 17th [announcement](#) of a planned 6,000-person expansion of Canada's part-time Primary Reserve Forces within four years.

"If fully implemented by a re-elected Conservative government, this plan would mark the most important commitment to part-time units and personnel by any federal government since the mid-1960s – when the unification of Canada's three armed services heralded several decades of neglect of Canada's once-proud Militia and other Reserve elements," said Lieutenant Colonel (retired) John Selkirk, Executive Director of Reserves 2000.

Selkirk also welcomed the more realistic annual cost projection included in the proposal. For several years, the Department of National Defence (DND) has claimed that the annual cost to maintain 24,000 Primary Reservists was roughly \$50,000 per Reservist or \$1.2 billion (in 2012/2013 dollars).

In comparison, this plan's projected annual cost of \$10,566 per Reservist or \$63.4 million to maintain the additional 6,000 personnel more closely corresponds to the costs calculated by Reserves 2000.

Interestingly, the current [Canada First Defence Strategy](#) quotes a figure of \$150,000 as the cost of providing a new full-time sailor, soldier or airman or airwoman. "Canadians can see from the figures in this proposal that hiring and training more part-time Reservists is a cost-effective option to increase Canada's defence capabilities," said Selkirk.

"However, the long-term retention of these newly-trained soldiers really depends on stable and predictable funding, a condition not always available to Reserve units," he continued. "In 2010, for example, Militia training was ordered to cease for the first three months of the year. Many part-time Reservists were forced to quit their units in order to take on other part-time employment to pay for tuition, rent or other living expenses."

Unlike full-time military personnel and civilian employees of DND who are salaried, part-time personnel are only paid for training.

Furthermore, part-time pay is considered to be part of DND's operations and maintenance

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budget. This allows budget managers at all levels of the military to appropriate Reserve pay funds for other purposes at any time during the fiscal year.

In fact, after one month without training in 2010, former Minister of National Defence Peter MacKay ordered Canada's Army Commander to restore training and pay for Reserve soldiers. By that time, however, many Reservists had already voted with their feet and quit – resulting in the loss of numerous part-time soldiers who had been trained at significant cost to Canadian taxpayers.

So, while Reserves 2000 applauds the Conservative Leader's new plan to provide more predictable, sufficient and sustainable funding to support a planned expansion of Reserve Forces, additional policies are required to safeguard the transparent management and apportioning of Militia funds – and to prevent the 'clawback' of monies intended to pay Canada's part-time soldiers.

"While we are hopeful that these initiatives will be implemented, our supporters know that each of these objectives will require close monitoring. Our supporters are eager to see the plans of the other leaders, particularly from Mr. Mulcair and Mr. Trudeau. We stand by to assist each of the federal parties in any way possible," Selkirk concluded.

About Reserves 2000

Founded in 1994, Reserves 2000 is a not-for-profit, non-partisan coalition of Canadians, including retired and serving women and men of Canada's Army Reserve units, veterans, honoraries, and the public. We wish to see stronger and more vital part-time Reserve units, with more Canadians able to participate. A thoughtful, appropriately funded expansion of the Reserves will provide Canada with a cost-effective increase in its defence capability and benefit communities and individuals, particularly our youth.

Canada's Army Reserve: By the numbers

- **250 Army Reserve units or sub-units** are currently located across Canada in **115 unique cities, towns or villages** in each of Canada's 10 provinces and the Northwest Territories;
- Some **163 different armouries** or CAF facilities in communities large and small; and,
- **125 Members of Parliament** in roughly **one-third of Canada's 338 new federal electoral districts** currently represent communities hosting Army Reserve units.

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Additional commentary on the Conservative Party's plan to expand the Canadian Armed Forces Reserves

On the Conservative plan to shorten recruitment and enrollment times

Reserves 2000 welcomes the [Conservative Party's August 17th pledge](#) to streamline and shorten the inordinate amount of time – **often 150 days to more than one year** – that it currently takes to enroll an Army Reserve recruit, to no more than 60 to 90 days.

- Despite ample evidence that the Canadian Armed Forces' (CAF) overly-centralized enrollment process does not serve the needs of Militia units, the Department of National Defence (DND) has done little in recent years to improve the situation.
- An independent study conducted by the Defence Science Advisory Board in 2013, produced a 2014 report entitled ***Recruiting the Millennial Generation***, found that the military took, on average, 160 days to enroll a recruit.
- Predictably, once the CAF's recruiting machinery had ground its way around to making an offer of part-time employment to a potential recruit, many of Canada's most eligible and well-qualified young people had already accepted positions with other employers.
- The CAF Recruiting Group's dismal performance, highlighted in a report that was [widely reported in 2014](#), noted that increased attrition across all ranks and military occupations was, in part, the result of less funding following Canada's decade-long Afghanistan deployment.
- Since that period, **the strength of the Canada's Army Reserve Force declined to more than 2,500 below its budgeted level.**

On the Conservative plan to broaden the Reserves' base of eligible candidates

The attrition of trained Reservists is of major concern to every Militia unit. We applaud Mr. Harper's pledge to broaden the base of eligible candidates to include Permanent Residents of Canada.

If combined with additional tools, Militia units *may* be able to staunch the precipitous decline in their paid strength.

In addition to predictable pay, Army Reservists expect meaningful and challenging training and, like any unsatisfied employee in the labour force, will quit if sufficient opportunities remain unavailable.

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On the Conservative plan to make infrastructure improvements at armouries and training facilities across Canada

If fully implemented, the government's announcements made during the May through July 2015, will see over \$135 million in upgrades to Reserve unit armouries and training facilities across Canada.

As part of the government's \$5.8 billion [Federal Infrastructure Investments Program \(FIIP\)](#) announced in November 2014, DND was specifically provided with \$452 million over two years towards the repair and upgrade of approximately 80 CAF facilities across Canada – many of them home to one or more Reserve units in cities and towns ranging from [Rivière-du-Loup](#) to [Richmond](#), [Sherbrooke](#) to [Stratford](#), to [Vernon](#), [Kitchener](#), [Sault Ste. Marie](#), [Oshawa](#) and beyond.

On the oft-made suggestion that Canada's Army Reservists should receive non-combat oriented training including disaster assistance skills

Training in new skills, such as fighting forest fires, is appealing but should only be implemented if additional days of training are allocated to units.

The amount of training currently available to Army Reservists is the bare minimum necessary to maintain individual skills such as weapons handling, first aid or basic fieldcraft.

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