



## **Canada faces major security decisions**

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Prime Minister Paul Martin has stated that the debate over Canada's participation in the American ballistic missile defence program is a "very, very important one."

As a member of Parliament since 1997, I could not agree more. All sides must be heard -- both within Parliament and among the broader Canadian public. Many dimensions must be considered -- economic, fiscal, military and diplomatic -- and, at the end of the process, Canadians must be convinced that the decision the government ultimately takes is one that best serves Canadian security interests.

It seems to me that the case against this weapons system -- and Canadian government participation in its development -- is a convincing one.

Despite the billions of dollars spent to date, the system does not work. Most of it hasn't even reached the drawing-board stage, let alone passed the testing stage.

The planned deployment of two missile interceptors in mid-September seems cynically calculated to win a partisan political advantage in the run-up to the November elections in the United States, rather than a serious attempt to increase American security.

Indeed, retired American general Robert Gard, one of 49 retired generals and admirals who signed an open letter to U.S. President George W. Bush calling for the postponement of the missile defence system, told an Ottawa National Press Club audience last month that the premature deployment of untested missile defence components will significantly complicate the effort to develop a functioning system.

The stated aim of this weapons system is to protect against one, or a few, long-range ballistic missiles fired by a "rogue" state, such as North Korea. But how likely is it that a rogue nation would target the U.S. in this manner when American satellites can pinpoint the source of missile launches, leaving the attacker open to devastating nuclear retaliation?

Surely there is a significantly greater danger of terrorists trying to anonymously smuggle nuclear weapons into the United States in shipping containers.

Wouldn't American and Canadian security be better served by diverting ballistic missile defence funding to urgently needed upgrades for American ports and nuclear weapons storage installations?

The likely impact of this proposed weapons system on international peace and security is grim. In 1972, the Soviets and Americans signed the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty agreeing to not develop missile defences. They did so because they feared that establishing systems that could shoot down some incoming ballistic missiles would spur each side to develop ever more nuclear missiles to overcome the defences.

Sadly, the Bush administration unilaterally withdrew from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in 2001, arguing it was outdated.

But Russia's ambassador to Canada, Georgiy Mamedov, recently reminded Canadians that his country is determined to maintain a sufficient number of nuclear weapons on high alert to overcome the missile defence system being constructed by the United States.

What of China? It is upgrading its nuclear weapons and developing missiles tipped with many warheads, allowing a single missile to destroy numerous targets. This was another incredibly destabilizing technology that the Soviets and Americans limited by treaty in the 1970s, but now the deployment of the U.S. missile defence system is spurring China to develop these lethal nuclear weapons systems.

The potential impact of this missile defence weapons program on space is a hotly contested one. Martin and our foreign affairs and defence ministers have repeatedly assured us that Canada will have no part whatsoever in the weaponization of space, one of the last regions where no weapons are deployed.

In fact, Canada has been a leader at the United Nations in fighting to keep space free of weapons.

But an expert report prepared by our own Department of National Defence warned that such leadership could be fatally undermined by our participation in the American missile defence program.

Serious issues of national and international peace and security require a serious and thoughtful examination. We need to hear from Parliament on this. As an educator for over 20 years, I know that the groundwork needs to be laid before we can hold a meaningful debate.

I suggest the creation of a joint parliamentary committee, composed of members from both foreign affairs and national defence, with a broad remit to inquire into the full implications of Canadian participation in ballistic missile defence, including the arms

control and non-proliferation dimensions and the impact on the broader Canada-U.S. defence relationship.

Then -- and only then -- will all members of Parliament be able to consider for themselves how best to meet Canada's security requirements.

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