

'Arm's-length' Military Institution Promotes Belligerent Worldview

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Not satisfied with Canada's largest public relations machine, the Canadian Forces also employ various "arm's-length" institutions to push their influence over the discussion of military and international affairs.

For example, the Conference of Defence Associations (CDA) Institute recently published a half-page ad in the *Globe and Mail* to announce its Conference on Security and Defence. The March 3 and 4 meeting at the venerable Château Laurier was sponsored by the Department of National Defence (DND) and Global Affairs as well as Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and other arms companies. As in previous years, CDA's confab in Ottawa drew leading military and political officials, including the Chief of the Defence Staff, who heard speakers hype security threats and push for increased military spending.

The headlines the conference generated included: "Russia poses most immediate military threat to Canada, top general says" ([Globe and Mail](#)), "Canada and the West are at war with Russia whether they want it or not: military experts" ([Global](#)) and "Top Canadian general calls out Russia and China for 'antagonistic actions'" ([CTV](#)).

None of these stories explained what the CDA Institute actually is. The group describes itself as a "[non-partisan](#), independent, non-profit organization [that] expresses its ideas and opinions with a view to influencing government security and defence policy." Established in 1932, then Minister of Defence Donald Matheson Sutherland backed CDA's creation. Since its inception CDA has been directly or indirectly [financed](#) by DND. Initially, member associations paid a small part of the funds they received from DND to CDA. But, three decades later the role was reversed. CDA received a block grant from DND and parcelled out the money to its various member associations.

Since its creation, defence ministers and governor generals (as commander in chief) have regularly appeared at CDA's annual conference. The governor general, prime minister, defence minister and chief of the defence staff are honorary patrons or vice patrons of the organization.

At the height of Canada's war in Afghanistan CDA received a highly politicized five-year \$500,000 contract from DND. University of Ottawa professor Amir Attaran wrote, "[that money](#) comes not with strings, but with an entire leash." To receive the money CDA committed to producing 15 opinion pieces or letters to the editor in major Canadian newspapers, generating 29 media references to the organization and eliciting 100 requests for radio/television interviews. The media work was part of a requirement to "support activities that give evidence of contributing to Canada's national policies." CDA didn't

[initially disclose](#) its 2007-12 DND sponsorship agreement, which was reviewed by cabinet.

CDA represents over 50 military associations ranging from the Naval Association of Canada to the Canadian Infantry Association, Royal Canadian Legion to the Military Intelligence Association. It is run by high-ranking former officers.

CDA publishes Security and Defence Briefings, Vimy Papers and Presentations and Position Papers. The organization's quarterly journal *ON TRACK* "[promotes](#) informed public debate on security and defence issues and the vital role played by the Canadian Armed forces in society." CDA has also published influential books such as Queens professor Douglas Bland's *A Nation at Risk: The Decline of the Canadian Forces*.

To encourage militarist research, CDA awards a number of prizes. It puts on an annual graduate student symposium where \$3,000 goes to the winning paper, \$2,000 to second place and \$1,000 to third place. CDA co-sponsors the Ross Munro Media Award to a "journalist who has made a significant contribution to understanding defence and security issues" and gives the Vimy Award to a "Canadian who has made a significant and outstanding contribution to the defence and security of Canada and the preservation of (its) democratic values."

CDA advocates militarism. Its first official resolution noted "the urgent need for an increased appropriation for national defence." At almost every CDA convention between 1946 and 1959 a resolution passed in favour of compulsory military training. A 1968 resolution called for universal military training, expressing concern that a generation of Canadians had become "unused to the idea of military service."

In the 1980s CDA developed the idea of the "Total Defence of Canada". In 1985 Colonel H. A. J. Hutchinson told a CDA meeting: "I would say that the Total Defence of Canada requires much more than just the support of the Canadian Armed Forces, it involves the organization of our total economy, our industrial base, towards a single objective — the defence of this country." Hinting at the need to talk up US President Ronald Reagan's revival of Cold War rhetoric, Hutchinson said this "can only be made [possible] if the Canadian people perceive that it is necessary and that, in fact, it is the only course of action open to them."

A 2000 CDA report funded by the Business Council on National Issues, the Molson Foundation and DND advocated increased military spending to defend free trade. It claimed "the defence establishment, including the Canadian Forces, plays a key role in an international policy which provides the insurance and the means which allow the national interest to flourish. It contributes to stability at home and abroad, thus supporting the development of an environment congenial to trade."

In November Richard Fadden told CDA's Vimy Dinner Canada had to be "[clear-eyed](#)" about Russia and China, which are prepared to "use virtually any means to attain their goals." Fadden claimed, "the risks posed by these two countries are certainly different, but they are generally based on advancing all their interests to the detriment of the West."

For the military and the industries that profit from militarism, it is important to have "arms-length" organizations that create the illusion of a diversity of voices. But honest writers should be blunt about the CDA. It is a war machine front group, created and controlled by the military.

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