

# McGuinty ‘confident’ Canada will hit NATO spending targets

KYLE DUGGAN  
The Canadian Press

Canada is injecting tens of billions of dollars into defence as it looks to ramp up spending to levels not seen since the Cold War — both to meet its NATO commitments and to juice the domestic economy.

But it remains to be seen whether National Defence — a department which the opposition Conservatives point out has tended to struggle to spend its full budget — can actually push money out the door quickly enough to convince Canada's allies it's getting serious about its military.

Defence Minister David McGuinty tells The Canadian Press he's "confident" the federal government will hit its marks and that Ottawa is "moving quickly" on the accounting.

"We have a very disciplined approach here to acquiring what we need ... We've broken it down into bite-sized pieces and we're making progress," he said.

"The truth of the matter is for the first time in a long time, the Canadian Armed Forces and National Defence are being properly funded, and this is long overdue." He pointed to a number of large expenditures already in play, such as \$2 billion for the military pay increase this year, renewed aid for Ukraine worth \$900 million and a string of new procurements and infrastructure upgrades.

Canada was something of a pariah within the NATO alliance just a little over a year ago, when it was being called out by American politicians for consistently failing to meet its spending commitments.

A Pentagon document leaked to The Washington Post revealed former prime minister Justin Trudeau told American officials Canada would "never" meet its NATO commitment of spending the equivalent of 2 per cent of GDP on national defence.

Documents prepared for Trudeau just ahead of the 2024 NATO summit, obtained by *The Canadian Press* through



Access to Information, provided him with canned responses arguing that the path to 2 per cent is "a journey" and that it "cannot happen overnight."

Just one year and one prime minister later, the message from Ottawa is now very different. Prime Minister Mark Carney announced in June his government would meet the target this year, then later that month committed Canada to reaching 5 per cent by 2035.

The risks involved in not meeting the target are clear. U.S. President Donald Trump has repeatedly warned NATO nations not to expect the U.S. to come to their aid if they don't pay their share on defence, and recently gloated about forcing the alliance to hike its collective spending floor.

"NATO calls me daddy," Trump said in a Dec. 9 interview with Politico.

Carney's first federal budget laid out nearly \$82 billion in defence spending over the coming years, with \$9 billion booked for this year alone. Many details on where all the money is going remain obscure to outside observers.

NATO projections suggest Canada is on track to spend some \$63 billion on defence this fiscal year.

David Perry, president of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute think tank, said Canadians won't know for months if all of the earmarked money actually gets Canada to the 2 per cent mark.

"I wouldn't bet my own money that every dollar of it gets spent, but I do think we will pass the bar that we need to politically within the alliance (showing that) at least we've tried," he said, adding that the department lapsed significantly less funding than usual this year.



THE CANADIAN PRESS SPENCER COLBY  
Prime Minister Mark Carney speaks during a press conference at Canadian Forces Base 8 Wing Trenton in Trenton, Ont., on Aug. 8.

Anessa Kimball, director of the Center for International Security at Laval University, said the 2025 budget provides an "incomplete picture."

Kimball said it's missing key items such as the planned fleet of expensive new submarines and a full fiscal plan through to 2035 — and may even run about half a billion dollars short of the 2 per cent target.

But even though the share of spending by GDP can fluctuate depending on how the economy performs, Kimball said she thinks Canada will be "close enough" to the mark to avoid further diplomatic turbulence.

"I'll be watching to see in the end in March if they actually do it," Kimball said, "but it looks like they've aligned themselves."

U.S. Ambassador to Canada Pete Hoekstra told The Canadian Press the U.S. takes Carney "at his word" when he says Canada will reach the 5 per cent target and the "indications" are that Ottawa is getting serious on increasing military funding. That should quell any bilateral tension with Washington over defence — at

least for the time being.

The 5 per cent figure also includes a carve-out allowing "defence-adjacent" spending — such as infrastructure upgrades — to count toward the NATO commitment, making it easier to hit that bigger number.

Kerry Buck, Canada's former ambassador to NATO, said that carve-out makes sense because the alliance still needs to spend money on infrastructure to support its militaries — by, for example, upgrading the many older bridges in Europe that still can't bear the weight of tanks.

The 2025 budget claims the 1.5 per cent target will be easily met through anticipated provincial and municipal spending, meaning Ottawa only really needs to worry about the remaining 3.5 per cent.

"The 1.5 per cent spending can include spending on a regional level," NATO spokesperson Noellke Paul confirmed.

Kimball said the opaque nature of NATO's definitions permit "creative accounting" to help member states reach the

difficult 5 per cent figure. Many questions remain about what qualifies, however — such as whether the planned Alto high-speed rail project could qualify as "defence-adjacent."

But then there's the problem of maintaining momentum with even steeper commitments barreling down on the government.

"It's going to be a big stretch for us just to get to 2 per cent, and we'll see whether or not we get here in one year. Moving to 3.5 per cent is a considerable lift beyond that," Perry said.


"The higher the intended spending rate goes, the more defence's relationship with the rest of the government of Canada ... is going to influence this. If we are legitimately on a path to 3.5 per cent of GDP being spent on defence, that's going to see a big reallocation of dollars spent on other activities of government."

Kimball notes Carney will still have to convince both Parliament and voters the high spending is needed, since all of the funding for future years still needs to be approved.

## Preserving Alberta's past, one settlement and cemetery at a time



Supplied photo Trent Wilkie



### Medicine Hat

## NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

### SUBDIVISION AND DEVELOPMENT APPEAL BOARD

#### APPEAL #3-2025

#### 902 KINGSWAY AVE SE

#### (LOT 1, BLOCK 7, PLAN 483M)

TAKE NOTICE THAT the following appeal will be heard by the Medicine Hat Subdivision and Development Appeal Board at a Public Hearing in City Hall Council Chambers, commencing at **10:00 am on Monday, December 29, 2025.**

Development Permit application PLDP20250704 submitted by Doggos Ltd. proposes a Change of Use at 902 Kingsway Avenue SE from Retail and Consumer Services to Animal Services. The site is designated as Mixed Use (MU) District in the Land Use Bylaw # 4168 where Animal Services is a discretionary use.

If you wish to view any documentation with regard to this matter, you may do so by attending at the City Clerk Department, 3rd Floor, City Hall between the hours of 8:30 am and 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday.

Written/electronic submissions, regarding the above, will be accepted and placed before the Board. All submissions will be treated as public documents and must be received by the undersigned by **4:30 p.m., Monday December 22, 2025.** Oral submissions are limited to five (5) minutes.

Melissa Wagner,  
Subdivision and Development Appeal Board Clerk  
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**TRENT WILKIE**  
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Alberta Family Histories Society is working to make Alberta's past more modern, with projects that index names from community history books and provide detailed online cemetery records.

Ron Gilmore, director of AFHS, said the organization runs several initiatives focused on preserving Alberta history.

"Circa 1967, the federal government provided some funding (\$1 per person) to local historical societies if they undertook to craft a book about the history of their settlements," Gilmore said.

"Some provinces matched that funding. The historical folks jumped on this and a host of community books were published. AFHS has been the beneficiary of many of such books in our library."

Gilmore said the Settlements Project, an initiative that archives names from community history books and makes them searchable online, is now indexing names from those community books and making them searchable online.

"Not long ago, we initiated a project to index the names of the people in these books and make that available online," he said. "This site also encompasses the Cemetery Project led by Wendy Schultz. For cemeteries, you can see the most common surnames, death rates and longevity rates."

The Cemetery Project documents and analyzes Alberta cemetery records and also includes maps showing which settlements have been completed and links to related books.

For Schultz, the work is deeply personal.

"I was a member of the society while I was still working, but I didn't get involved until I retired in 2016," she said. "At one of the first meetings I attended, the cemetery team lead stood up and asked for volunteers to help with cemetery work. I thought, 'Well, I can do that.' So I did. That

eventually evolved into me becoming team lead. I'd always been interested in genealogy, and I think a lot of that was because my parents split when I was young and I didn't know my dad. I got a genealogy computer program and started entering everything. Like a lot of people, I got bit by the bug and just kept going."

The team visits Calgary cemeteries weekly to check for new markers, using city burial records as a guide. Rural cemeteries are handled through road trips and community partnerships.

"We don't just go out and write down the name and take the photos," Schultz said. "We research because we really want to know everyone who's buried at a cemetery, whether they have a marker or not. We do a lot of research before it ever goes online — fact-checking and verifying and making sure we're comfortable with what we're saying. You learn some funny stories along the way."

That attention to detail takes investment.

"Between the time it took to drive up there and get the photos, set up a spreadsheet, research everything — all of these names to get extra information, find out who was buried there without a marker, link the photos and photo IDs to the spreadsheet so it all shows up well on our website — we've probably spent about 40 hours on that cemetery," Schultz said. "If you're going to do this properly, you put in the extra time because these people deserve it."

Every cemetery has a story, Schultz said, and some are perfectly weird.

"There was a case at Pine Creek Cemetery, formerly known as Winton, which is now inside Calgary city limits on the south side," she said. "A number of years ago, a man wasn't satisfied with the health care his mother had received in hospital. He felt things hadn't been handled properly, so he hired what you might

call a questionable doctor from the U.S. to fly up. They performed an autopsy at the cemetery in the middle of the night. The doctor flew out the next day, so authorities couldn't catch him. Groundskeepers noticed the soil had been disturbed and started investigating. It turned out the health system was cleared of any wrongdoing. She had been treated properly. The gentleman just had some issues and ended up going to a facility for a while."

Other stories are more creative than criminal.

"Blackie created a columbarium structure," Schultz said. "It's all the little niches that urns go into. It's an above-ground outdoor structure, and they decided to shape it like a grain elevator, which I thought was a great idea because it's a rural farming community."

The project is massive. AFHS currently has 373 cemeteries online, with a backlog of about 20 more, including High River, which has more than 6,000 names. As for those who would like the team to visit their community, there is a bit of a wait.

"They'll take a place at the end of the list, that's for sure, but it will take us a while," Schultz said.

The work doesn't stop at names and dates. The AFHS website offers analytics on longevity, burial rates and even surname clouds showing the most common names in a cemetery.

"You can go on our website and search for surnames," Schultz said. "This is the AFHS website, not the Alberta Ancestors website. Searching for surnames is like one-stop shopping for any information our society might know about a person. If you put in your search names there, you might get newspaper clippings if we have them, cemetery records, and find out if the people you're looking for are already present in some family trees of our society members."