

It is a great pleasure and honor for me to be asked to participate at the at the Defence Policy Review roundtable in Vancouver.

I begin by stressing that Canada is not a militaristic country and it has never been a military one, yet the military has always been a very important part of our history, without the presence of a strong military our lives and our country would certainly have been different.

Today, it seems, discussion on our armed forces are relegated to the back, the national discourse today about defence seems to be consigned to hushed discussion in backrooms and hardly about the proud history of our forces, their heroics or formative role in our history.

The Canadian Armed Forces executes operations at home and around the world to ensure Canada's safety and to safeguard our values. What they do around the world, allow us to do what we do here without fear.

Tasks undertaken by those serving in our forces in various parts of the country and around the world affect us daily, yet many Canadians are unaware of these selfless acts. These acts include fighting forest fires, dealing with disasters from flooding to earthquakes, contributing to international peace and security, patrolling our coasts, monitoring our skies all in service of protecting Canada, are just some of the tasks that fall under the military and are public knowledge.

The world today seems confused and this confusion is demonstrated via the many conflicts around the world, war and bloodshed are the reality of these conflicts that are just a step away from our borders and this makes it an opportune time to discuss the issues at hand and our military.

It is now the time and more important than ever to not only be aware of our military but the men and woman that serve and for us to ensure they can continue not only to serve but for us to provide them with the tools to keep an edge over those that would like to see our lives disturbed.

We must as a nation come to realize the changing face of conflict and be ahead of developments in supporting an advanced military with modern tools to deal with new global problems.

In many parts of the world, we read daily and see videos that rebellion, war and carnage is ongoing. Blood is flowing, corpses and severed heads spread on the ground, we as a nation must have the tools to extinguish this fire.

We must strengthen the backs of our soldiers, support their efforts, and captivate their hearts with the Respect of a grateful nation.

This does not mean that we keep servicing out of date equipment, but rather modernize the equipment to be able to deter and defend what may come at us expectantly and with a force that we are unprepared for.

We must find a way to realize that the world is not as safe as we would like to hope and that the tools of conflict are changing. We must sacrifice where we can and obtain the funding to provide the most modern and appropriate tools for dealing with such conflicts, whether it be a new aircraft or an older jeep. Spending to modernize our military, hardware and people must become a long term policy and a top priority.

A new Canadian forces policy on diversity must be developed and the Canadian military must build inroads to the changing communities of Canada namely the visible minorities. And more important the military must find ways to promote its diversity

The full measure of our armed forces potential and success is not yet revealed, its significance still underappreciated and not properly conveyed or understood by the general public.

The Canadian forces have demonstrated such a nobility when dealing with the lack of funding, broken equipment, shortage personnel or fortunes it must be assured that they will obtain confirmations and respect from all those they come in contact with and understand their plight.

The Public Consultation paper ends with the slide "Sharing our experience" slide. That sharing is what we can do best at gathering such as today's Defence Policy Review roundtable where we can bring new ideas or discuss old ones for the best and proper working of a diverse yet united country on a formulating the best policy for continued improvement to our forces.

Farid Rohani