

MP's REPORT: Canada in the World ? Defence and our NATO Alliance

By Leona Alleslev, MP

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We are at an unprecedented time of global instability. International alliances are being questioned, trade negotiations are being challenged, and there is a shift in power dynamics on the global stage. So, what does this mean for Canada and where does Canada stand?

That is precisely what I would like to explore with you at the Town Hall I am hosting on June 10 from 2 ? 4 p.m. at the Aurora Public Library. We will focus on Canada's military past, Canada's current role in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and what our government should focus on to prepare for the future.

In addition to my role as your Member of Parliament, I was recently elected as Chair of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association (NATO PA). I lead the Canadian parliamentarians on this association to represent our nation on the international level. The Canadian NATO PA is made up of Members of Parliament and Senators from all political parties. Each NATO country has a NATO Parliamentary Association and sends their representatives to meet annually with the NATO PA Secretariat in Brussels.

As our country celebrates 150 years of Confederation, it is clear that not all points in history are equal, and I would argue that we now find ourselves at a tipping point. Some would go as far to say that the world is the most unstable it has been, both from an economic and defence and security perspective, since the end of the World War II.

We are experiencing a substantive increase in threats posturing from nation states, as well as from non-state terrorist organizations. These threats take the form not only of conventional military means such as occupying forces, missiles, and invasion of sovereign air spaces but also of asymmetric threats.

During the Cold War, there was arguably a single, clear and defined aggressor. Today, the threat is materializing both from a state or non-state actor, from economic or security perspectives, from traditional and conventional means and perhaps even more alarming from cyber threats, hacking, misinformation and fake news.

After personally meeting with parliamentarians from other countries, I can assure you that the world is looking to Canada to lead. One of the key ways in which Canada can lead is through its membership in NATO.

NATO is a political, military and economic alliance. Canada has not, is not, and likely will not be in the future, one of the top financial contributors to NATO either through Defence spending as a percent of GDP or its financial contribution to the common funded programs. However, the value of a contribution to an alliance is not solely defined in financial terms. Canada has led and must continue to lead in NATO through other ways that are no less valuable and no less important.

The world will be looking to Canada on May 25 as the NATO country leaders (Prime Ministers and Presidents) meet in Brussels to discuss NATO's role in the fight against terrorism, as well as the transatlantic bond and fair burden-sharing, in line with commitments made at the Wales and Warsaw Summits. This is a time for Canada to demonstrate the value of the contributions we can and will make.

At the same time, parliamentarians from the NATO countries, our Canadian delegation included, will meet in Tbilisi, Georgia for the Annual Spring Meeting for the NATO PA.

Parliamentarians from all parties, government and opposition, will engage in discussions about the current role of NATO. I will communicate on behalf of Canada and will bring back the messages from our North Atlantic allies to share with Canadian government officials, fellow Parliamentarians, and you, my constituents. I look forward to seeing you on June 10.

TOWN HALL: Canada in the World. Please join me to continue this conversation on Saturday, June 10, 2017 from 2 ? 4 p.m. in the Magna Room of the Aurora Public Library located at 15145 Yonge Street, Aurora, ON.

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