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READY TO HELP THROUGH PEACE-SUPPORT SHIPS
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READY TO HELP THROUGH PEACE-SUPPORT SHIPS

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READY TO HELP THROUGH PEACE-SUPPORT SHIPS

AIM

1. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that the absence of peace-support ships in the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) creates a vulnerability at the operational and strategic levels. The paper discusses the need for the acquisition of peace-support ships in the RCN to meet the unique demands of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) at home and abroad as stipulated in *Strong, Secure, Engaged* – Canada’s Defence Policy. Canada is currently not fully prepared to respond to natural disasters and weather-related emergencies, as stipulated in its Defence Policy. This paper will show that from the increases of natural disaster events in the past 100 years, it can be extrapolated that the future demands on Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) will increase as well. Therefore, these peace-support ships will not only be important to Canada, but vital to fulfill its mandate. Identification of building strategy is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it will address a feasible option, should Canada be ***Ready to Help*** and change the world with human kindness, with one peace-support ship at a time.¹

INTRODUCTION

2. Canada’s Defence Policy issued by the government in 2017 clearly states that Canada will be able to “act in multiple theatres simultaneously.”² This includes; providing HA/DR at home and abroad, leading of complex Task Group operations, and providing a navy, Ready to Fight, in support of NATO’s commitments.³ Put simply, with

¹ Department of National Defence, *Royal Canadian Navy: Strategic Plan 2017-2022*. (Ottawa: DND, 2017), 4.

² Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada’s Defence Policy*. (Ottawa: DND, 2017), 16.

³ Department of National Defence, *Royal Canadian ...*, 4.

Canada's aging fleet, its current capability gaps, and the repeatedly delayed construction of much needed ships through the National Shipbuilding Strategy (NSS)⁴, the RCN cannot independently fulfill all of its assigned duties under the policy.⁵

3. In 2016, the premature retirement of *HMCS Preserver*, the last of the *Protecteur* class supply ship, left the RCN with a major at-sea replenishment capability gap.⁶ This gap was rectified in 2018 with the transformation of a commercial container ship (MV *Asterix*) into an interim Auxiliary Oiler Replenishment (iAOR) ship.⁷ Although this platform provides strategic at-sea services to the RCN, it has limitations. Basically, it cannot deploy in task group operations and serve at the same time on a humanitarian mission, due to its lack of redundancy. Currently, Canada has only one iAOR, and will remain this way until at least 2023 when the first Joint Support Ship (JSS) is due to be delivered. This translates into a four-year gap in which Canada will have to compromise its Defence Policy. It has already happened. For example, the *Ottawa Citizen* reported in October 2018 that although a Canadian supply ship was in the Pacific, it would not be used for the tsunami relief efforts, even if it was estimated that some 200,000 people needed assistance.⁸

⁴ House of Commons, Standing Committee on National Defence, *The Readiness of Canada's Naval Forces*, no. 42, June 2017, 1:40.

⁵ Jeffrey F. Collins, and Andrea Lane, "Why Canada Needs a New Supply Ship for Relief Missions," *Institute for Research on Public Policy*, (21 June 2018), <https://policyoptions.irpp.org/magazines/june-2018/why-canada-needs-a-new-supply-ship-for-relief-missions/>.

⁶ House of Commons, Standing Committee . . . , 1:25.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:44.

⁸ The *Ottawa Citizen*, "Canadian Supply Ship in the Pacific but Not Being Used in Tsunami Relief Efforts," (04 October 2018), <https://search.proquest.com/docview/2116419641/fulltext/D8F1323FECF04171PQ/1?accountid=9867>.

4. When active, the Protecteur-class AORs gave limited onshore support to other CAF units participating in peace support and in HA/DR operations.⁹ It is expected that both JSS will also have a limited sealift capability, which will make them ill-fitted for effective HA/DR operations, as they will have neither the cargo vessel capability to deploy emergency equipment, vehicles and supplies, nor a large storage inside to allow wheeled vehicles to be loaded and discharged without cranes.¹⁰ Therefore, the requirement to acquire peace-support ships is paramount if Canada wishes to meet its Defence Policy.

IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

5. Over the past 100 years, a significant amount of natural disasters occurred due to climate change, but what is noteworthy is the increase of these disasters in the past few years as depicted in Figure 1. Notably, Figure 1 shows that from 1980 to 2018, the amount of natural disasters increased from 133 to 282 respectively, and that this amount was at its highest in 2005 with 432 reported disasters.¹¹ Extracted from these numbers were the average floods, drought, extreme weather, and earthquakes which occurred during the same period that is from 1980 to 2018 as compared with 1941 to 1979, a span of 38 years. Table 1 clearly shows that the average number of natural disasters per year has increased significantly, and most notably that of floods, and that should be of concern.

⁹ Jeffrey F. Collins, and Andrea Lane, “Why Canada Needs . . . , *Policy*, (21 June 2018).

¹⁰ Kevin McCoy, and Tom Tulloch, “Why Canada Needs a Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Ship,” *Canadian Naval Review* 13, no. 1 (2017): 5-7.

¹¹ Hannah Ritchie, and Max Roser, “Natural Disasters: Empirical View,” *Our World in Data*, (2019), <https://ourworldindata.org/natural-disasters>.

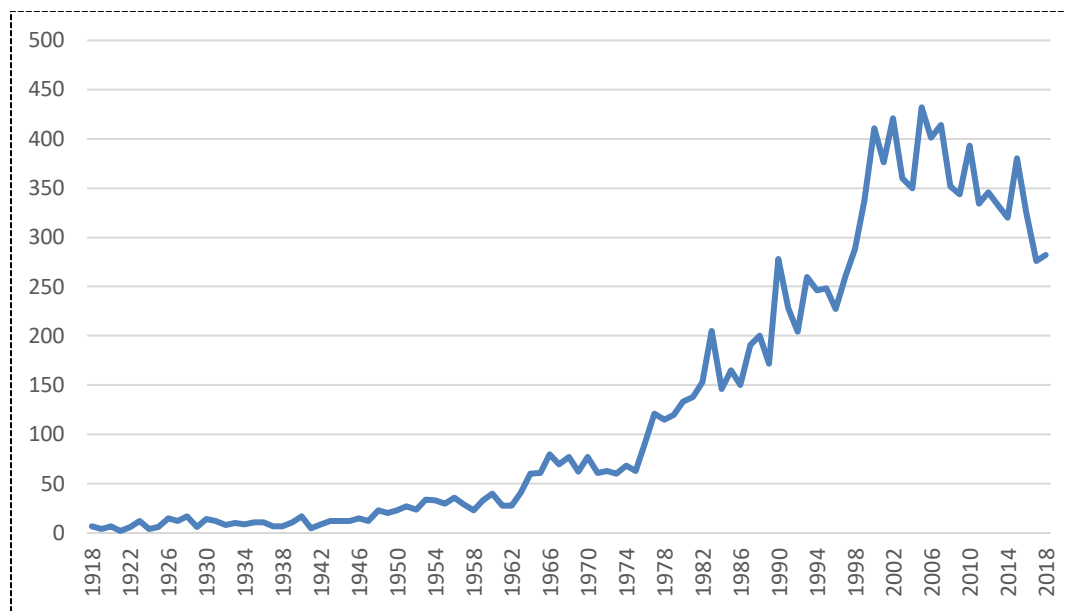


Figure 1 – Number of Recorded Natural Disaster Events, all Natural Disasters

Source: EMDAT (2019): OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database,
Université catholique de Louvain – Brussels – Belgium

Table 1 – Average Natural Disasters per Year Over 38 Years

| Average Natural Disasters per Year | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------|---------|-----------------|-------------|
| | Flood | Drought | Extreme weather | Earthquakes |
| 1941-1979 | 13 | 3 | 17 | 7 |
| 1980-2018 | 113 | 15 | 86 | 25 |

6. Natural disasters affect people, particularly those who live along coastlines as shown in Figure 2.¹² Scientifically, it is proven that warmer temperature increase disasters such as hurricanes, cyclones, tsunamis, and sea levels. For example, at the beginning of the 21st century, the sea level globally was 20 centimeters higher than what is currently being reported due mostly to thermal expansion of the oceans and melting of

¹² McCoy, and Tom Tulloch, “Why Canada Needs . . .”, 4.

glaciers and ice caps.¹³ Evidently, people closer to oceans are at risk. As a matter of fact, close to 10 million people live in cities located on coastal plains within 50 metres of sea level. The island of Java has 113 million people who live only three metres above the sea.¹⁴ The impact of climate change is serious, and will bring a greater requirement for HA/DR relief around the world. Canada, must therefore be ready to land a helping hand as stipulated in *Strong, Secure, Engaged* through a global capability, that of peace-support ships.



Figure 2 – Global Disasters 2000 – 2016

Source: McCoy, and Tom Tulloch, *Why Canada Needs a Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Ship*, 5.

¹³ UN News, “Feature: Climate Change and the World’s Oceans, (5 June 2017), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/06/558822-feature-climate-change-and-worlds-oceans>.

¹⁴ Pat Ambrose, “Argument for Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief Ships [Part 1],” *Canadian Naval Review*, (23 January 2018), <https://www.navalreview.ca/2018/01/argument-for-humanitarian-assistancedisaster-relief-ships-part-1/>.

CANADIAN RESPONSES TO DISASTERS

7. So far, Canada has deployed more than once to help those in needs after disasters have occurred. For example, in 1980, the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) airlifted clothing for earthquake survivors to Algeria after an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.3 struck, killing 5,000 people and injuring 9,000.¹⁵ The Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) was deployed to the Philippines in 2013 to assist as a result of typhoon Haiyan which killed many people, and injured several others.¹⁶ The response to the earthquake in Haiti in 2010 saw a combined force of two Canadian naval ships, aircrafts, the DART, and Canadian Red Cross. Moreover, Canada has sent several other CAF units on HA/DR operations since 2000.¹⁷

8. Although Canada's contributions to HA/DR have been significant thus far, each capability has its drawbacks. The DART is highly specialized, but is limited in personnel and cannot always provide medical care without the permission of state licensing agencies.¹⁸ Aircraft, such as the CC-177s, are useful for delivering relief supplies, but they are expensive to operate and depend on functioning airfields. Moreover, these assets are limited in their capacity to carry a copious amount of supplies as compared with peace-support ships. Further, with an RCAF fleet of just five CC-177s, it would be unlikely that more than two would be available at short notice for a [significant] HA/DR

¹⁵ Canada. Department of National Defence, "Algeria 1980," last modified 18 July 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/military-history/history-heritage/past-operations/africa/algeria-1980.html>.

¹⁶ Canada. Department of National Defence, "Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) Deployments," last modified 9 October 2018, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/operations/military-operations/types/dart/deployments.html>.

¹⁷ McCoy, and Tom Tulloch, "Why Canada Needs . . .", 4.

¹⁸ Joseph Scanlon, Elizabeth Steele, and Alex Hunsberger, "By Air, Land, and Sea: Canada Responds to Hurricane Katrina," *Canadian Military Journal* 12, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 56.

operation.¹⁹ As for the RCN ships, as mentioned before, with only one operational iAOR at the moment, and an aging fleet of *Frigates* with no capability of Roll-on/Roll-off (Ro-Ro), it would be difficult to imagine that Canada could quickly respond to a major HA/DR event, let alone that Canada must be able to concurrently respond to domestic and international operations as stated in Canada's Defence Policy. Lastly, although supply ships and *Frigates* have substantially contributed to HA/DR in the past, their functions are primarily replenishment at sea and war fighting, thus the need for a Canadian dedicated *maritime* capability to provide HA/DR is present.²⁰

IF PEACE-SUPPORT SHIPS ARE REQUIRED, WHY CANADA?

9. In recent years, Canada has been crawling towards the idea of implementing the acquisition of peace-support ships, but the crawling stopped. For example, when then Chief of the Defence Staff, General Hillier, pushed for an amphibious transport capability for Canada, such as the *San Antonio* Class from the US Navy, Canada did not pursue the purchase.²¹ Commander (Retired) Hensen, along with other witnesses, shared the same sentiments in 2016 when they argued that acquiring an amphibious support ship would not only be crucial for HA/DR, but as well for peace support, and other types of operations at home and abroad, thus enhancing internationally the RCN's logistical support capabilities.²² Again, Canada did not consider this platform as part of its ongoing National Shipbuilding Strategy. The most recent reiteration in favour of peace-support ships was in *Leadmark 2050*. In that document, the Navy conveyed that acquiring a large

¹⁹ McCoy, and Tom Tulloch, "Why Canada Needs . . .", 5.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 6.

²¹ Corey Bursey, "The Royal Canadian Navy in Peace Operations," *Canadian Military Journal* 17, no. 4 (Autumn 2017): 31.

²² House of Commons, Standing Committee . . ., 1:64.

“Peace-Support Ship” would “broaden the fleet’s ability and flexibility to conduct operations ashore . . . including humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.”²³ With the current capability gaps of the RCN, and the need for peace-support ships, the near future will indicate if Canada is not only willing to crawl, but to crawl-walk-run.

10. Besides Germany, Canada is the only Country in the G-8 with no amphibious capacity. As shown in Table 2, Singapore, Australia, Italy, Japan, and Korea all have small numbers of amphibious ships. In recent years, other countries such as China, Taiwan, India, and Indonesia have also procured amphibious ships. China is continuing to improve its capabilities through the Type 071 Yuzhao-class landing platform dock (LPD), and is awaiting two other 18,000-tonne ships capable to participate in distant soft power military diplomacy, peacekeeping, and humanitarian operations.²⁴ Similarly, Taiwan has procured a 16,000-tonne vessel scheduled to enter service in 2021.²⁵ India operates a 17,000-tonne Indian Navy Ship (INS) *Jalahwa*, a former US Navy (USN) Austin-class LPD that was refitted and upgraded.²⁶ Lastly, Indonesia welcomed its sixth LPD in 2019, a 11,400-tonne vessels primarily used for sealift operations between the 17,500 islands that make up Indonesia.²⁷

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Jane’s World Navies, “China > Navy > Core Assets and Procurement Initiatives > Amphibious Forces,” last modified 25 September 2019, https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/FG_2310313-JWNA#.

²⁵ Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment – China and Northeast Asia, “Taiwan > Navy > Core Assets and Procurement Initiatives > Amphibious Warfare Ships,” last modified 25 June 2019, https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/FG_2312068-CNA#.

²⁶ Wong, Kelvin, Jane’s International Defence Review, “Analysis: Asia-Pacific Navies Pursue Enhanced Amphibious Lift,” last modified 16 January 2015, <https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/idr17305-idr-2015#>.

²⁷ Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment – Southeast Asia, “Indonesia > Navy > Core Assets and Procurement Initiatives > Amphibious Forces,” last modified 25 September 2019, https://janes.ihs.com/Janes/Display/FG_2310857-SEA#.

Table 2 – HA/DR Capable Vessels in Mid-Tier Navies

| Nation | Vessel | Displacement | Cargo Capacity | Helicopters |
|-----------|--|---------------|---|--|
| Singapore | <i>Endurance</i> Landing platform dock | 6,500 tonnes | 20 trucks Bulk cargo | 2 medium lift or 1 heavy lift helicopter |
| Australia | <i>Choules</i> Landing ship dock | 16,190 tonnes | 1,150 lane metres 150 light trucks or 700 troops | 2 medium lift helicopters |
| Australia | <i>Canberra</i> Landing helicopter dock | 27,500 tonnes | 110 vehicles 1,040 troops | Hangar space for 18 helicopters |
| Italy | <i>San Giorgio</i> Amphibious transport dock | 7,650 tonnes | 350 troops with up to 36 vehicles | Up to 5 helicopters |
| Japan | <i>Osumi</i> Tank landing ship | 8,900 tonnes | 2 vehicle decks 300 troops | Up to 8 helicopters |
| Japan | <i>Izumo</i> Helicopter destroyer | 27,000 tonnes | 400 troops and 50 light trucks | Up to 28 aircraft |
| Korea | <i>Dokdo</i> Landing platform | 18,800 tonnes | 720 troops or up to 200 vehicles | Up to 10 helicopters |

Source: McCoy, and Tom Tulloch, “Why Canada Needs a Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Ship”, 6.

11. Canada is well positioned to acquire peace-support ships for several other reasons than those aforementioned. First, Canada has a large population spread across the globe. From the 2016 census, it was reported that close to 2.8 million Canadian live abroad, which is an equivalent of 9% of the overall Canadian population, or 4 in 10 Canadians. Currently, close to 1 million Canadians live in the United States, and 300,000 in Hong Kong.²⁸ The severity and magnitude of extreme weather events which have developed all over the world in recent years will likely continue to generate humanitarian crises in the future.²⁹ Therefore, Canada must have the capability to respond to natural disasters beyond its borders when called upon and bring Canadian back home when required.

12. Second, Canada being in proximity of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans provides considerable operational reach. From the east, Canada is strategically located to provide

²⁸ Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, “Canada’s Global Asset: Canadian Abroad,” (2011): 3.

²⁹ Martin Shadwick, “The Canadian Armed Forces and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR),” *Canadian Military Journal* 18, no. 4 (Autumn 2018): 77.

disaster relief assistance to the Arctic, the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, and some countries of the Middle East, while on the west, it is advantageously located to provide disaster supports to Asia, and Australia. Central America and South America are reachable by both coasts.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE ACQUISITION OF PEACE-SUPPORT SHIP

13. Currently, Canada's defence budget has no margin for the construction of peace-support ships, although there are some possibilities to acquire existing platforms and convert them into peace-support ships; an intervention which would be much more economical to Canada than building these new capabilities. The conversion of Marchant Vessel (MV) *Asterix* into an iAOR provides a great example. When the RCN's "*Heart of the Fleet*" and "*Support with Courage*" supply ships were paid off in 2015 and 2016, an important at-sea replenishment capability gap existed within the Navy.³⁰ To remediate, a contract of \$587 million was laid in November 2015 to transform the MV *Asterix* into an iAOR for the RCN.³¹ The Resolve-class iAOR was later accepted by the RCN and declared fully operational on 29 January 2018.³² This contract exemplified the rapidity with which Canada was able to advance on its capabilities when faced with a crucial gap. Such conversion could be realized as well for another much needed capability, that of peace-support ships.

14. One affordable solution would be the conversion of a recently built European twin-engine Ro-Ro vessel of 21,000 tonnes displacement into a Maritime Support Ship

³⁰ House of Commons, Standing Committee . . . , 1:44.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² "The Royal Canadian Navy's Plan for an Interim Auxiliary Oil Replenishment (iAOR) with the Help of Davie Shipbuilding and the Asterix Boxship," *The Canadian Armed Forces Dispatch* (blog), 7 February 2018, <http://cafdispatch.blogspot.com/p/project-resolve-rcn-iaor.html>.

(MSS), capable of providing HA/DR to those in needs around the world, and of refuelling other warships at sea, thus providing the iAOR and JSS a backup when they unavailable.³³ For a cost under \$300 million, this peace-support ship would meet Canada's Defence Policy in that it would bolster [Canada's] ability to respond to severe weather and other natural disasters, both at home and abroad.³⁴ A versatile and self sufficient ship, capable of providing cargo, loading and unloading material, providing flight operations, and providing secondary employability as depicted in Figure 3, is the capability gap that Canada requires.

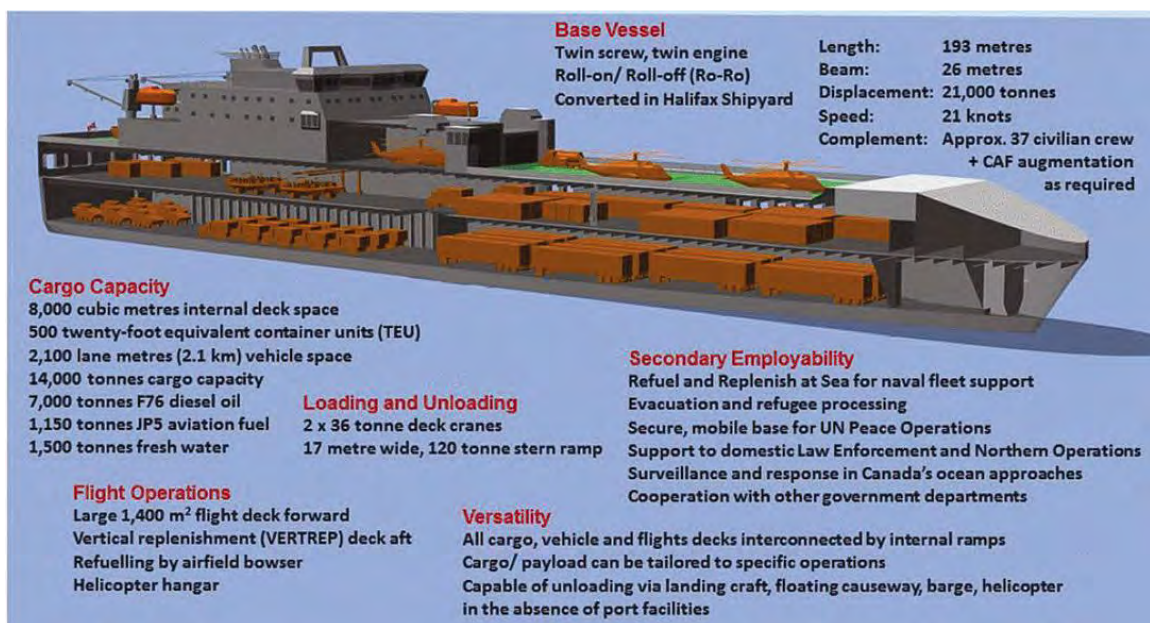


Figure 3 – Irving Proposal for a Maritime Support Ship

Source: Pike, “Maritime Support Ship / GMAS: Global Maritime Arctic Support Ship

³³ John Pike, “Maritime Support Ship / GMAS: Global Maritime Arctic Support Ship,” *Global Security*, (n.d.), <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/canada/hmcs-mss.htm>.

³⁴ Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure . . .*, 56.

15. The RCN's projection of a medium global power force ceased to exist with the paying off of the sustainment ships and destroyers. As Michael Byers argues, "we do not have a worldclass [sic] navy . . . we have 12 beautiful, very capable, refitted frigates," but the Victoria class "submarines are 30 years old" and the Kingston class Maritime Coastal Defence Vessels (MCDV) are about 20 years old and have been "deemed unworthy" of a mid-life refit. "That's our navy right now."³⁵ With this in mind, Canada, through the National Shipbuilding Strategy, is preparing to acquire 15 Canadian Service Combatant (CSC) ships, two JSS ships, and an extra five Arctic and offshore patrol (AOPS) ships, over the next two decades, but these ships will not have the same capabilities as an HA/DR ship, the capability that Canada is lacking. In order to meet Canada's Defence Policy, investing in economical and innovative peace-support ships would remove some naval vulnerabilities which are currently present in Canada.

CONCLUSION

16. The Liberal government promulgated Canada's Defence Policy in 2017. The document brought forward an engagement from Canada to provide assistance to civil authorities and non-governmental partners in responding to international and domestic disasters or major emergencies.³⁶ The policy also made reference to the severity with which natural disasters and weather-related emergencies have increased in the past, and that as they grow in frequency and intensity, they will bring with them an increasing need for [CAF] support for HA/DR.³⁷ Needless to say, climate change is real and the number

³⁵ House of Commons, Standing Committee . . . , 1:26.

³⁶ Department of National Defence, *Strong, Secure* . . . , 86.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

of natural disasters which have transpired in the past 100 years, and more notably in the last 38 years, have been significant, and it is only the beginning.

17. Warships are meant to defend the countries under which they belong. They are ill suited for HA/DR operations. The same is true for AOR. Climate change and natural disasters, will increase Canada's participation in HA/DR operations, therefore in order to meet our mandate today and into the future, it is imperative that the government invest today in a capability which will not only show the Canadian flag, but also display a country which shouts loud and clear that it is ***Ready to Help*** those in needs through its peace-support ships.

RECOMMENDATION

18. It is highly recommended that the Canadian government consider the acquisition of two existing commercial ships, and that they be transformed into two peace-support ships one for each coast, to provide prompt HA/DR response to those in needs as promulgated in *Strong, Secure, Engaged*.

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