



“In the first 21 years, Canada’s coal regulations are expected to result in a cumulative reduction in greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to removing some 2.6 million personal vehicles per year from the road. As a result of our regulations, Canada became the first major coal user to ban the construction of traditional coal-fired electricity generation units. These regulations further cement Canada’s place as a clean energy super power as we boast the cleanest electricity system in the G-7 and one of the cleanest in the world, with 77 per cent of our electricity supply emitting no greenhouse gases.”



Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of the Environment¹

Canada is the second-largest country in world (after Russia) and largest in the Americas. As a large country, there is a diversity of vulnerabilities to climate change.² Canada has been experiencing more severe spring floods, fed by earlier melting snow.

A warming climate may significantly change their timing and magnitude, particularly in southern regions of the country, directly affecting the seasonal and annual cycles of stream flow and freshwater availability. Canada has one of the world’s largest arctic coastlines; a region that is changing faster than anywhere else in the world.³

Summary

Country: **Canada**

Region: **North America**

ASP Assessment:

Vulnerability: **Low**

Perception of Climate Change: **Security Threat**

Capacity: **Good**

Preparedness: **Adequate**

Overall Assessment: **Good**

The Climate Threats

Regional Disaster Vulnerability

- More severe winter storms
- Increase frequency of storm surges
- Droughts⁴

Links Between Climate and Conflict

- Canada is not at risk from climate change
- Increased need for Canada to participate in global security as more conflicts develop

The Need to Adapt

- Development of oilsands in Alberta⁶
- Reliance on oil production
- No national focus on environment⁷

Direct Threats to Homeland Security

- Displaced first nations
- Damaged infrastructure
- Significant loss of biodiversity and freshwater resources⁸
- As channels open in Arctic, competition will develop for resource development



How is the Country Preparing for Climate Threats

Preparing for Disaster Response

“Over the last decade, our military has been called upon to assist civil authorities in dealing with a number of natural disasters, including floods in Manitoba and Quebec, the ice storm in Eastern Canada, and forest fires in British Columbia. As Hurricane Katrina has shown in the United States, such disasters will continue to occur, often with devastating consequences, and the citizens affected will expect immediate responses.”

- Ministry of National Defence of Canada, Defence Strategy 2008⁹

Adapting Installations

“National Defense is also the custodian of a number of heritage buildings and has a strong program to promote environmental stewardship, including thorough cleanup and remediation initiative.”

- Ministry of National Defence of Canada, Defence Strategy 2008¹¹

Breaking the Link between Climate and Conflict

“The Federal Sustainable Development Strategy (FSDS) outlines the Government of Canada’s commitment to improving the transparency of environmental decision-making by articulating its key strategic environmental goals and targets. Defense ensures that consideration of these outcomes is an integral part of its decision-making processes. In particular, through the federal Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) process, any new policy, plan, or Program initiative includes an analysis of its impact on attaining the FSDS goals and targets. The results of SEAs are made public when an initiative is announced, demonstrating the department’s commitment to achieving the FSDS goals and targets.”

- Canadian Department of National Defence, Report on Plans and Priorities 2012-13¹⁰

Planning for Homeland Security Threats

“Retreating ice cover has opened the way for increased shipping, tourism and resource exploration, and new transportation routes are being considered, including through the Northwest Passage. While this promises substantial economic benefits for Canada, it has also brought new challenges from other shores. These changes in the Arctic could also spark an increase in illegal activity, with important implications for Canadian sovereignty and security and a potential requirement for additional military support.”

- Ministry of National Defence of Canada, Defence Strategy 2008¹²

Analysis

Canada is often cited as one of the few ‘winners’ from climate change. Although that may be a stretch, it certainly is one of the least vulnerable countries to the security threats of climate change. Its borders are not threatened and its people are prosperous and wealthy enough to adapt to changes in climate. The most important area for Canadian security planning from climate change is certainly in the Arctic, where rapid ice melting has opened new channels of travel and resource development. The Canadian military has responded with plans for a variety of Arctic patrols. Far beyond its shores, the Canadian military has been a key component of stabilization and peacekeeping missions for years, and will likely play important roles in global humanitarian missions. However, its planning for climate change has become caught in a political desire by the government to not talk about climate change due to long-running fights about the Kyoto Protocol and oil exploration. In the UN, Canada’s representative said that “climate change...would not be the driver of conflict.” Therefore, although some in Canada clearly understands that climate change is a security threat, it has not been communicated effectively. Until the Canadian leadership begins to address the threats of climate change, ASP can only rank it as “good,” with “adequate” preparation for climate change.

The American Security Project’s Global Security Defense Index on Climate Change is an examination of how international governments and militaries plan for and anticipate the strategic threats of climate change

For more information and references see:

globalsecuritydefenseindex.org