

Opening Statement to the Senate Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs in its examination of defence procurement in the context of Canada's commitment to increase defence spending (17 Nov 2025)

- By Peggy Mason, President of the Rideau Institute

Thank you for inviting me to testify.

My focus is on why Canada should not participate in the strategic ballistic missile defence elements of the Golden Dome project mandated by President Trump's January 27 Executive Order. Instead, Canada should focus on its major commitment to upgrading NORAD's surveillance and early warning systems, including a space-based satellite surveillance component.

My reasons for urging Canada once again (as it has done twice before – in 1985 and 2005) to forego participation in America's strategic BMD programme are:

- **It is technically infeasible and fiscally unsound;**
- **It is destabilizing and will undermine, not enhance, North American security**
- **Its weaponization of space will put at risk civilian systems on which life on earth today literally depends.**

The Trump Executive Order effectively revives Ronald Reagan's 1983 Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), which called for a multilayered defence system to intercept and destroy intercontinental ballistic missiles during all three phases of their flight (boost phase, mid-course and terminal phase). But it goes further, aiming not only to protect America from nuclear attack, but also from conventional missiles, including hypersonic and cruise missiles and aircraft attacks. As with Reagan's SDI, a prominent aspect of the proposed Golden Dome system is the inclusion of space-based weapons, including warhead interceptors.

Strategic BMD is technically infeasible

There is an avalanche of congressional, scientific and expert reports summarizing the technological challenges to, and the failure of, the two-decades long \$250 billion US dollar effort to develop just one aspect of SDI, a reliable, effective ground-

based ballistic missile defence system designed, not against nuclear peers, but to intercept in mid-course a limited ICBM attack by a rogue state, namely North Korea.

Golden Dome is the massive expansion of an unsound system, requiring a mega-constellation of orbiting satellites in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) carrying interceptor missiles. These satellites would be enormously vulnerable to relatively cheap missiles or maneuverable satellites, anti-satellite capabilities that Russia and China both already possess.

Fiscally unsound

The \$175 billion Golden Dome price tag cited by the U.S. President is widely considered unrealistic. The U.S. Congressional Budget Office has estimated that proposed space-based elements of the current GMD program against the North Korean threat could exceed \$500 billion over 20 years.

Strategic BMD is profoundly destabilizing and undermines global security

Bearing in mind that any offensive ballistic missile system is much easier – and cheaper - to mount than the defensive systems that try to stop them, the simplest way for an adversary to respond to a strategic missile defence system is to overwhelm it with more offensive missiles.

The mere possibility that U.S. ballistic missile defences might someday work sufficiently to undermine its capacity for a retaliatory nuclear strike (upon which nuclear deterrence depends) has incentivized China to move beyond its “minimum deterrence” posture and engage in a major expansion of its nuclear arsenal.

Both China and Russia have also turned to new technologies like hypersonics to get around missile defences.

The likely result of Trump’s proposed vast expansion of America’s strategic ballistic missile defence programme will be to trigger a destabilizing new nuclear arms race, as well as to seriously undermine any efforts to revive arms control amongst nuclear-weapon states.

Weaponization of space

Weapons in space (contrary to long-standing Canadian policy) would undermine the security of vital civilian and military satellites by creating debris fields, interfering with operations, or causing direct physical destruction. **These actions would threaten essential global services like communication, navigation, finance and environmental management.**

Canada's NORAD modernization role

Rather than wasting \$99.5 billion on this dangerously misguided project, Canada should focus its resources and expertise on its major commitment to the modernization of NORAD's surveillance and early warning systems, including a space-based satellite monitoring component.