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June 8, 2013

Hon. Robert Chisholm, MP
NDP Fisheries & Oceans Critic
Evergreen Place, Suite #204
530 Portland St
Dartmouth, NS B2Y 4V6

Dear MP Chisholm,

Today is World Oceans Day. As you are the Member of Parliament for Dartmouth and the NDP Critic for Fisheries & Oceans, I am writing to you to express my concern about the adverse impacts of the Canadian navy on the marine environment and my opposition to the National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy (NSPS). This is the federal plan to spend \$25 billion of our tax dollars to build new armed combat vessels for the navy at the Irving Shipyard in Halifax. It is also the largest defence procurement in our country's history.

Sylvia Earle, the acclaimed marine biologist and author the book *The World is Blue: How our Fate and the Oceans are One* has said, "If the sea is sick, we'll feel it. If it dies, we die. Our future and the state of the oceans are one." Canadian journalist Alanna Mitchell compiled the many severe threats to marine environment in her award-winning book *Sea Sick: The Global Ocean in Crisis*. Canada's most recent *State of the Oceans* report (2012) describes the following troubling indicators:

- Ecosystem shifts from climate change
- Ocean acidification from greenhouse gases and its threats to shellfish and to corals and sponges that provide critical habitat to marine life
- Sea ice variability and the melting of ice
- Hypoxia, which is the reduction of dissolved oxygen in the ocean (there are now 407 dead zones around the world – this number has doubled since 1960)
- Increased presence of invasive species
- Increased pollution, from oil spills, dumping, and plastics

I am concerned about the adverse impacts of the Canadian navy on our oceans, which include the following:

- Oil spills, such as the diesel spilled by a frigate in the Halifax Harbour this year
- Injuring and killing marine life, such as whales and dolphins
- Noise pollution from sonars and explosives
- Toxic munitions debris from past and current naval operations
- Chemical weapon dumpsites
- Destruction of coral reefs

I would like to know why Canada is building warships instead of taking urgent action to address the crisis in our oceans and the catastrophe of climate change? Why is Canada building warships instead of building marine protected areas and preparing coastal communities for rising sea levels? Why did you and your party push for a National Shipbuilding Procurement Strategy in 2010 instead of a National Green Economy Strategy? A National Green Economy Strategy would employ Canadians across the country to help our country reduce greenhouse gases and protect our rivers and oceans.

The federal NDP and the provincial NS NDP have both touted the job creation potential under the NSPS. A study by the Conference Board of Canada showed that the \$25 billion combat ship contract would create 11,500 additional jobs in Nova Scotia during the peak of construction in 2020. However, many reports by the Blue Green Alliance, a network of labour and environmental organizations, have showed that many more jobs could be created in a green economy in Canada. The alliance's most recent report released in November 2012, *More Bang for our Buck: How Canada can Create More Energy Jobs and Reduce Pollution*, revealed that a federal expenditure of only \$1.3 billion would employ 18,000 workers. Canadians could be put to work restoring rivers, cleaning up contaminated sites, doing more marine research, protecting endangered marine life, installing renewable energy technologies, and fortifying coastal infrastructure to withstand increased extreme weather events. The research shows that more green jobs could be created than shipbuilding jobs, so why are you not pushing the federal government to spend our tax dollars to ensure the maximum number of jobs for Canadians that will also tackle the climate crisis and protect our natural environment?

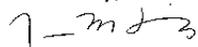
In the House of Commons, you have derided the Conservative government for "gutting laws on habitat protection, slashing fisheries science capacity and cutting \$75 million from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans." Yet, you support \$25 billion to be spent on new warships when the budget for the federal department of Fisheries & Oceans Canada continues to be cut.

For the past several years, I have been tracking federal revenues and expenses through the Public Accounts of Canada. Please see the graphs attached below. I am very concerned that the budget for the Department of National Defence has doubled from \$10 billion in 2006 to \$22 billion in 2012. The *Canada First Defence Strategy* has committed \$490 billion of Canadians taxes on the military over the next 20 years. By contrast, the budget for the Department of Fisheries & Oceans (DFO) has stayed flat at approximately \$1 billion for the past 14 years but the crisis in our oceans is worsening. Further, according to its 2013-2014 Plans and Priorities, Fisheries & Oceans Canada's budget will be cut more by 2015 (see: http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/rpp/2013-14/RPP_2013-14.pdf). DFO is the lead agency to implement Canada's Oceans Act (1997). However, the David Suzuki Foundation documents how DFO is failing to fulfill its commitments under the Act due to lack of political will and budget constraints.

Faced with catastrophic climate change and global fisheries collapse, I believe that our country cannot waste any tax dollars on warships along with fighter jets, tanks, armed drones and military interventions. As the Earth Charter declared, we must "Demilitarize national security systems to the level of a non-provocative defense posture, and convert military resources to peaceful purposes, including ecological restoration" (16c). As well, we can more prudently deal with marine challenges and conflict with international law, such as the United Nations' *Convention on the Law of the Sea*, diplomacy, and negotiations instead of with warships. The oceans are in an extremely vulnerable state; they do not need more warships, but instead need our protection.

Finally, I would like you to know that I have been protesting outside the Irving Shipyard in Halifax every week since December 2012. I have a web site that I am compiling information about the warship contract: www.demilitarize.ca and I have a blog about my weekly protest: "Wednesdays against Warships": <http://demilitarize.ca/wp/>. I will post your reply on my web site when I receive it. I look forward to your answers to my questions and an explanation for why you support the warship strategy. Thank you for your time and attention to my concerns.

Sincerely,

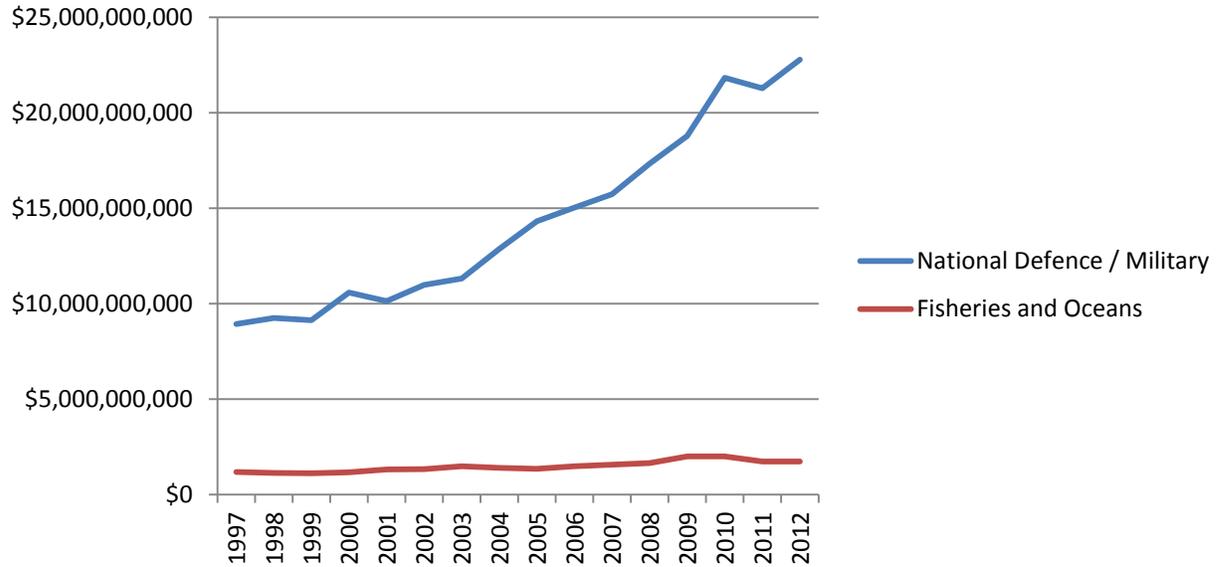


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cc: The Honourable Keith Ashfield
David Suzuki Foundation
Greenpeace Canada

Federal Spending on National Defence v. Fisheries & Oceans Canada

Source: The Public Accounts of Canada: <http://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/recgen/cpc-pac/index-eng.html>



Federal Departmental / Program Expenses 2011-2012 Not including Transfer Payments. From the Public Accounts of Canada.

