



**NATO ASSOCIATION OF CANADA |
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE POUR L'OTAN**

Policy Paper on Canada's National Resilience

Executive Summaries & Policy Recommendations

September 2026

Introduction to Executive Summaries

In 2016, NATO allies agreed on seven Alliance-wide baseline requirements for national resilience. These requirements were intended to ensure that member states build the capacity to continue delivering essential services, including energy, food, healthcare, transport, and communications, in times of crisis. Alongside other NATO members, Canada has committed to strengthening its resilience in line with these requirements.

Ten years later, we are seeing an acceleration in world tensions. The nature of warfare is evolving at a rapid and disruptive pace, with profound implications for national security, defence innovation, and international stability. Along with longstanding and emerging challenges ranging from climate change and digital threats to a changing geopolitical environment, this all contributes to an urgent need for national resilience. Reflecting these developments, NATO's 2026 revision of the Baseline Requirements considers a wider range of cross-cutting risks, including an increased emphasis on cyberattacks, emerging technologies, strategic dependencies, extreme weather events, and reliance on space-based assets.

Simultaneously, NATO's renewed spending agreement allocated 1.5% of GDP for defence and security-related investments, including critical infrastructure and resilience. This created an opportunity for Canada to ensure these investments reinforce the essential services and infrastructure on which Canadians rely both in their daily lives and in times of crisis.

Against this backdrop, the NATO Association of Canada has produced a Policy Paper on Canada's National Resilience. Each chapter examines a distinct dimension of resilience, assessing how Canada's current policies and their implementation position the country to meet NATO's baseline requirements and strengthen domestic resilience. Our authors highlight the many areas of achievement and progress Canada has already made. They also identify areas for further improvement and draw inspiration from Canada's allies in proposing ways to address remaining gaps.

This booklet offers a glimpse into the full paper by presenting each chapter's executive summary and main policy recommendations for strengthening Canada's resilience. We invite you to read the full paper, available on the NATO Association of Canada website.

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Chapter 1. Critical Infrastructure Resilience

Executive Summary

Canada's critical infrastructure underpins civilian continuity, military readiness, and national resilience. However, Canada's current approach to protecting critical infrastructure remains fragmented, outdated, and overly reliant on predominantly voluntary cooperation between public and private-sector actors. As climate change, cyberattacks, aging infrastructure, and global supply chain disruptions become more frequent and interconnected, these vulnerabilities threaten the continuity of essential services and Canada's ability to respond to crises. While the 2009 *National Strategy for Critical Infrastructure* established a foundation for cross-sector collaboration, it lacks clear accountability mechanisms, standardized resilience assessments, and an integrated civil-defence strategy aligned with NATO's Resilience Baseline Requirements.

Main Policy Recommendations

- **Modernize Canada's National Strategy for Critical Infrastructure** to reflect the current threat environment, as well as the evolution and increasing interdependence of Canada's critical infrastructure sectors. The strategy should include clearer governance, accountability mechanisms, and standardized resilience assessments for nationally significant infrastructure. A cross-government task force should be established to map the cross-over in tools and strategies across critical infrastructure, emergency preparedness, and national defence for whole-of-society resilience in time of disruptions.
 - **Embed mandatory risk assessments and resilience standards** into regulation and public procurement.
 - **Adopt an integrated whole-of-society approach** that aligns critical infrastructure planning with national security, emergency preparedness, and NATO resilience commitments.
 - **Improve public preparedness and awareness** through national disruption preparedness education and engagement initiatives.
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Author: Lou Didelot, Junior Research Fellow

Chapter 2. Economic Resilience and Supply Chains

Executive Summary

Recent crises have exposed significant weaknesses in Canada's economic resilience. The COVID-19 pandemic, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, climate-related disruptions, and growing geopolitical competition have shown how quickly disruptions to supply chains, transportation networks, energy systems, and critical imports can affect the Canadian economy. For NATO members, military readiness also depends on resilient civilian infrastructure and reliable access to essential goods and services.

Canada is particularly vulnerable because of its reliance on international supply chains and its close economic relationship with the United States. This integration has brought significant economic benefits, but it has also left Canada exposed to changes in U.S. trade policy, protectionist measures, transportation disruptions, and other external shocks. Canada also remains dependent on foreign markets in strategically important sectors such as pharmaceuticals, advanced technologies, and critical mineral processing.

Finland, Germany, and the Baltic states provide useful lessons for Canada on strategic stockpiles, economic dependencies, and the integration of resilience into national defence planning.

Main Policy Recommendations

- **Develop a Canadian Economic Security Strategy** that unifies trade, national defence, infrastructure planning, and industrial policy within a single governance framework.
 - **Diversify supply chains and trade partnerships** to reduce Canada's dependence on individual suppliers and markets, particularly in strategically important sectors.
 - **Expand domestic strategic capacity** through government incentives, public investment, and industrial partnerships in industries critical to national resilience.
 - **Build strategic reserves and strengthen emergency procurement capacity** for essential goods, including medical supplies, pharmaceuticals, emergency equipment, and fuel.
 - **Integrate economic resilience into national security and defence planning** by incorporating supply chain vulnerabilities, critical infrastructure risks, and strategic economic dependencies into national security assessments.
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Authors: Esha Grewal, Program Editor
Daria Synelnykova, Publications Team Lead

Chapter 3. Cyber Resilience and Digital Sovereignty

Executive Summary

Canada's digital resilience depends on two interconnected pillars: cyber resilience and digital sovereignty. As cyberattacks become more frequent and sophisticated, Canada's critical infrastructure faces risks from fragmented governance, uneven cyber security standards, and the increasing use of hybrid tactics by hostile actors. Simultaneously, Canada's digital sovereignty is undermined by its heavy reliance on foreign cloud infrastructure and digital service providers, and a low IP retention rate. This is exacerbated by comparatively weak regulatory frameworks which leave sensitive public and private data subject to foreign jurisdictions and limits Canada's control over critical digital infrastructure. While recent legislative initiatives represent important progress, some major gaps persist, and Canada continues to lack a comprehensive whole-of-society approach to strengthening cyber resilience and digital sovereignty.

Main Policy Recommendations

- **Establish a national cyber reserve** to connect the private sector, the Canadian population, and government bodies in civil resilience-building.
 - **Conduct regular national cyber exercises** to test and demonstrate domestic resilience with publicly available data, findings, and actions.
 - **Introduce measurable cyber security targets for critical infrastructure** within the CCSPA that includes specific oversight requirements for government agencies.
 - **Strengthen Canada's data privacy and cross-border data-transfer legislation** by requiring foreign companies operating in Canada to comply with Canadian standards.
 - **Prioritize domestic cloud services** for sensitive data storage and identify strategic digital services that should remain under full Canadian control.
 - **Diversify GPU procurement** by introducing interoperability standards and, where technically feasible, multi-vendor requirements for publicly funded computing infrastructure.
 - **Revise existing AI policies** to address job displacement, entry-level employment, and the environmental impacts of data-centre expansion, while balancing these concerns against national security & digital sovereignty objectives.
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Author: Keya Patel, Program Editor

Chapter 4. Public Health

Executive Summary

Canada's national public health resilience faces several impediments that undermine its ability to meet NATO's fifth baseline requirement of developing resilient health systems capable of coping during crises. These challenges include healthcare workforce shortages, limitations with physician training, a nursing retention problem, Federal-Provincial-Territorial jurisdictional fragmentation, issues with upkeep of National Emergency Strategic Stockpile (NESS), and a dependency on foreign-manufactured medical countermeasures. These issues share a common root cause: Canada has the capacity to address them, but lacks the legal, financial, and institutional mechanisms to convert capacity into functioning resilience.

Main Policy Recommendations

- **Health Workforce:** Canada should continue utilizing foreign-trained professionals to close the gap in the short-run, while expanding domestic medical and nursing training for the long term, and improve nurse retention through better working conditions.
 - **Pan-Canada Coordination:** Canada should expand shared health data collection, create a dedicated coordinating body modeled on the UK's approach, and continue working to bring Quebec into national planning while respecting its autonomy.
 - **Stockpile (NESS):** Canada should stock more routine medical supplies, guarantee stable long-term funding, and encourage increased participation through the private-sector, while promoting household stockpiling.
 - **Medical Supply Chain:** Canada should keep investing in domestic production of critical medical countermeasures to reduce reliance on foreign manufacturers.
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Author: Maya Khachab, Junior Research Fellow

Chapter 5. Environmental and Natural Disaster Preparedness and Response

Executive Summary

Canada's environmental vulnerability is outpacing its institutional response. Climate-driven wildfires, floods and severe storms are placing sustained pressure on Operation LENTUS, the Canadian Armed Forces' (CAF) domestic disaster-response mechanism, even though it was not designed to provide routine civilian emergency capacity. At the same time, critical infrastructure is deteriorating under climate stress, large data centres are adding pressure to electricity and water systems, and major Arctic defence investments face accelerating permafrost thaw. This chapter argues that Canada's central environmental and natural disaster preparedness and response challenge is institutional, not simply a shortage of military capacity.

This chapter uses NATO's seven baseline requirements for resilience to connect the environment with public safety, infrastructure continuity and national defence.

Main Policy Recommendations

- **Establish a National Adaptation Office**, headed by an officer reporting directly to the Prime Minister, to coordinate adaptation priorities and monitor implementation.
 - **Establish a federal Civilian Climate Emergency Corps** to provide trained personnel and logistics under agreed deployment arrangements. Retain Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) support for emergencies requiring military capabilities.
 - **Create a dedicated resilience fund or protected funding stream for high-risk public infrastructure.**
 - **Align digital growth with essential services.** Assess data centres against regional electricity, water and emergency needs. Clarify data-access, security and recovery obligations through legislation and procurement, and pilot a national data trust for selected disaster and infrastructure information, with privacy and Indigenous data-governance safeguards.
 - **Strengthen Arctic resilience** through partnership. Apply lifecycle climate requirements to civilian and defence infrastructure, give Indigenous partners meaningful governance roles, and coordinate northern procurement, shipping and workforce development.
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**Authors: Dr. John Walsh, Professor, Associate Professor, University of Guelph
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Chapter 6. Education and Information Resilience

Executive Summary

Canada's ability to withstand future crises depends on the strength of its civic institutions and an informed, resilient society. As hybrid threats, disinformation, cyberattacks, and geopolitical competition become increasingly prominent, education and information resilience have become integral components of national security. This chapter argues that education and information resilience should be understood as mutually reinforcing dimensions of Canada's resilience under Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty. Schools, universities, and other educational institutions play a vital role in developing the knowledge, critical thinking, democratic values, and public trust required to sustain effective governance during crises. An all-of-Canada defence culture will therefore require stronger democratic literacy and greater resistance to mis- and disinformation. It will also depend upon sustained cooperation between educational institutions and government, and upon protecting the institutions and habits of judgement by which a democratic society distinguishes truth from manipulation. Such cooperation must preserve academic freedom and institutional independence.

Main Policy Recommendations

- **Develop a National Education and Information Resilience Strategy** that integrates education, democratic literacy, public communication, institutional trust, and responses to mis- and disinformation.
 - **Strengthen coordination** between governments, educational institutions, and civil society through a national Article 3 Education and Information Resilience Table.
 - **Integrate democratic resilience, information literacy, source criticism**, and an understanding of contemporary information threats into educational programs.
 - **Invest in research, Serving Scholar-style programs**, and other initiatives that strengthen democratic resilience while safeguarding academic freedom and institutional independence.
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Authors: Rudy Yuan, Junior Research Fellow

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Chapter 7. Youth Engagement and Civil Preparedness

Executive Summary

Canada's long-term national resilience depends on preparing the next generation to contribute actively to their communities before crises occur. While Canadian youth demonstrate strong interest in civic engagement, volunteering, and public service, existing federal policies provide few pathways to translate this engagement into meaningful contributions to national resilience. This chapter argues that youth should be viewed as essential partners in strengthening Canada's preparedness for future emergencies. Drawing on lessons from NATO allies, it recommends expanding opportunities for civic participation, service, and preparedness while deferring any introduction of compulsory national service, for which there is presently no groundwork. By strengthening youth engagement through volunteerism, civil defence initiatives, and partnerships with civil society organizations, Canada can cultivate a resilient societal landscape that is better prepared to respond to future crises.

Main Policy Recommendations

- **Expand the Canada Service Corps** and other service programs to strengthen civic participation and support civil preparedness initiatives.
 - **Develop a national framework for civil preparedness** education in partnership with provinces, integrating emergency preparedness, digital literacy, first aid, and active citizenship into schools.
 - **Establish a national fund for community-based initiatives** that strengthens local resilience.
 - **Create new pathways linking education, volunteerism, and public service** to encourage long-term participation in national resilience.
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Access To Full Policy Paper on Canada's National Resilience



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