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Procuring the *Canadian Surface Combatant* – Let Us not Forget the *Statement of Operational Requirement*

As time advances, there has been increased lobbying to influence and shape the Government's views and decisions regarding the time-late recapitalization of Canada's ageing fleet of destroyers and frigates. According to a National Defence website, the *Canadian Surface Combatant* Project will be "the largest and most complex shipbuilding initiative in Canada since World War II." The new warships will likely not enter full operational service before the end of the next decade and they will likely be around well beyond the 2050s. At the heart of the process to acquire modern ships for the Navy is the need to satisfy the *Statement of Operational Requirement*, as hierarchically recommended to the Government by the Canadian Armed Forces and the Royal Canadian Navy.

Some of the lobbying will be discrete, and some will be less so. Some will express opinions or make assertions, in private or in public, which may be uninformed, biased or factually incorrect. Some will concern the Government's procurement process, and its perceived effectiveness and fairness, which is principally managed by Public Works Government Services Canada. Some will concern, directly or indirectly, the operational requirement and its perceived reasonableness.

The *Canadian Surface Combatant's* forward-looking *Statement of Operational Requirement* is developed by those maritime warfare professionals charged with providing Canada's maritime defence and security several decades from now, in a world where future defence and security crises are difficult, if not impossible, to predict. A future Government may one day choose or need to send naval forces into harm's way. The naval equipment to be acquired in the near future must ensure, in some difficult-to-predict distant future, a reasonable chance of military success and survivability. Those engaged in managing today's procurement process, regardless of which route is taken, must remain mindful of the key importance of endeavouring to provide tomorrow's generations of young sailors and aircrew with the equipment they may one day need, as reasonably recommended by the Navy in the *Statement of Operational Requirement*.

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