

CANADA

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

**PRESS RELEASE AND STATEMENT
BY THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA**

on

**POLICY CONCERNING
EVACUATION AND SHELTER**

for

CIVIL DEFENCE PURPOSES

as announced by

Right Hon. J. G. Diefenbaker

PRIME MINISTER

on

NOVEMBER 20, 1959

The Prime Minister, the Right Honourable John G. Diefenbaker, announced today that he has written to the Provincial Premiers on the subject of evacuation and shelter policy in Civil Defence.

The Government's views on the subject were outlined at the Dominion-Provincial Conference on Civil Defence Arrangements, held in Ottawa early in October, and the Minister of National Defence, the Honourable George R. Pearkes, V.C., said that the views would be reviewed in the light of the discussions at the Conference.

This review has now been carried out and the views of the Government with regard to the problem have been embodied in a statement sent to the Provincial Premiers, a copy of which is attached. In summary, the Federal Government's belief is that civil defence planning should be based on four major principles or features, namely:

- (a) The need to provide for some means of protection against radioactive fallout;
- (b) The voluntary dispersal from major cities of persons not required for essential tasks, to the extent that time may permit;
- (c) Preparations for the reception and care of evacuees in smaller communities and rural areas; and
- (d) Arrangements for removing persons from areas heavily contaminated by fallout.

***Statement by the Government of Canada on Policy Concerning
Evacuation and Shelters for Civil Defence Purposes***

Should a war occur, attacks on Canada by large nuclear weapons would be expected. Major Canadian cities might be selected as targets, although what priority cities would receive in comparison with other targets is conjectural at best. Furthermore, there would be an equally serious risk from attacking bombers being shot down over Canada with their bombs set to explode, or from missiles going astray from their targets.

Additional to the damage done in this way, there would be a widespread danger from radioactive fallout which would render it unsafe to be in some areas without substantial protection, or to be out-of-doors for more than very brief periods.

Although it is expected that in times of anticipated peril, many people will wish to leave the cities which are considered to be the more likely targets to take refuge in other less dangerous parts of the country, the Government considers that Canadians should not be compulsorily required to leave their homes for the result might well be that in avoiding one danger other risks would thereby be incurred.

At the same time we believe that proper provision should be made so that people desiring to leave the more likely target areas can do so, excepting of course that persons in certain classes of occupations must be asked to remain at their posts to safeguard essential utilities and services.

It is generally expected that in the event of attacks by bombers there would be sufficient warning time to allow many people to leave, if efficient traffic arrangements are planned in advance. On the other hand, when missiles are used, warning time will be reduced to a few minutes.

While as stated the Government does not propose to adopt a policy of compulsory evacuation of target areas on the outbreak of war, preparations should be made to enable those who wish to move to do so in an orderly manner so as to avoid confusion and keep panic to a minimum.

While shelters would be of considerable help in saving lives, to achieve a substantial amount of protection against a nuclear explosion itself would require a type of shelter that would be very costly. The Government is studying what might be achieved by anti-blast shelters in target areas, their cost, and how that cost might fairly be distributed. Complete protection cannot be achieved at any cost close to the explosion itself, as anti-blast shelters could not possibly be built in every area where a bomb or missile

might fall. The Government does not intend to reach a decision to build this type of shelter which in any event would provide a limited degree of protection until it is possible to assess its usefulness and cost.

It seems clear that substantial protection from radioactive fallout can be secured by individual households at reasonable cost. Relatively simple family refuges or shelters can be built in the basements of existing buildings for two or three hundred dollars. The Government will at an early date publish a pamphlet giving detailed suggestions for those wishing to provide this kind of protection for their families. Somewhat more costly backyard shelters can be built in homes without basements, but further study is required before a suitable type can be recommended to the public.

The provision of shelters against fallout for larger than family groups appears to be desirable and to this end the Dominion Government has proposed that the federal, provincial and municipal authorities jointly carry out surveys of existing large buildings to ascertain what protection they could afford.

While the foregoing represents its views, the Government intends to keep these problems under constant examination and to revise plans in this field from time to time as circumstances and events may make necessary.

November 19, 1959.

