



The Politics of Procurement: Military Acquisitions in Canada and the Sea King Helicopter

Aaron Plamondon

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Following its victory in the 1993 election, the first act of Jean Chretien's Liberal Party was the cancellation of an order to replace the Sea King maritime helicopter. The Liberals claimed the Tory plan was too expensive, but the cancellation itself actually cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. The incident and subsequent attempts to replace the Sea King have drawn public attention to inefficiency and waste in Canada's defence spending and to the under-equipped state of its military.

Seeking an explanation for this situation, Aaron Plamondon explores the history of the weapons procurement process since Confederation and describes the development of the navy's helicopter capabilities and the acquisition of the Sea King. His account of the bungled attempts to procure the Sea King's replacement reveals that partisan politics, rather than a clear desire to increase the military's capabilities, has driven Canada's military procurement process. As of 2009, it is still unknown when the Sea King's replacement will arrive in Canada.

A fascinating saga of politics playing havoc with military procurement, *The Politics of Procurement* is for anyone interested in Canadian military history, civil-military relations, or the roles of the government and the military in weapons acquisition.



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