

A Guide to Conscientious Objection to Military Taxation

This F-16 killing machine
uses more fuel in one hour
than an average car owner
consumes in two years.



*Take the bang
out of your tax buck,
don't pay for war*

In a previous generation, Conscientious Objectors stood before judges.

Both nervous and bold, they explained their reasons for not participating in war.

Though the stakes for us are not as high, we too are faced with an uncomfortable choice – whether or not to contribute our tax dollars to Canada’s military. This is a military increasingly involved in combat missions in which people die.

Whether this choice makes you feel nervous or bold, this booklet explains the ins and outs of Conscientious Objection to Military Taxation as well as other ways to resist Canada’s military complex.

With our country now fully at war, it’s time to talk about conscientious objection.



Photo: Mennonite Heritage Centre, Ed Brooks Photo Collection

COs during World War II,
Riding Mountain National Park, Manitoba.

Number of Canadian soldiers involved in UN
peacekeeping missions in 1991: 1149

In 2009: 56 military, 178 police; out of a total
of 97,000 worldwide

Ratio of Canadian government expenditure on
defense to expenditure on international
development: 4:1

Amount Canada's military spent in 2009-2010:
\$19.8 billion

Projected cost of Afghanistan mission from
start through 2011: \$18 billion
(parliamentary budget officer, 2009)

Percentage of federal income tax payment
that goes to the military: 8.9%

Beyond numbers

To see the human cost of war, see the
Afghan Victim Memorial Project:
pubpages.unh.edu/~mwhero1d.

*Sources: CBC, Conscience Canada, DND,
Polaris Institute, Project Ploughshares*

Our dollars are conscripted

Seldom in history
have big guns
seemed less useful
than now.

The most sophisticated army ever assembled is sputtering to an ugly, awkward halt, unable to deliver on promises to improve the lot of humanity.

In the wake of this military impotence, the doors of history have opened – even if just a crack – to a new direction. Now, a move toward less aggressive options is a possibility.

Canada could become a bold, peacemaking nation. Imagine if well-trained, un-armed Canadians intervened in conflict zones around the world in ways that reduced violence and protected average civilians. Instead, Canada is becoming increasingly aggressive and militarized.

This aggression is expensive and the money can only come from one source: taxes. Our dollars are conscripted.

One of the strongest statements against militarization is to re-direct the portion of your taxes that would otherwise fund the military. This is what Conscientious Objection to Military Taxation is about.

Good reasons to become a Conscientious Objector to Military Taxation

It shows solidarity with Conscientious Objectors around the world—past and present—who live the power of peace.

It supports the development of nonviolent means of conflict reduction, such as a nonviolent peace force.

For many of us it is not enough to avoid personal military service because we know that funds taken from us in the form of tax will be used for war and other violent purposes. In other words, we know that we will be made complicit in war through our taxes no matter what our beliefs and values might be.

It's a concrete expression of opposition to the negative environmental impact of war.

Canada spends over \$523 per person per year on its military. Meanwhile, it would cost \$430 per person per year for Canada to do its part to prevent the most disastrous effects of climate change by reducing its greenhouse gas emissions.

Source: Stern Review on the economics of climate change, Public Accounts of Canada.



Jonathan Seiling, historian

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR TO MILITARY TAXATION

Depicted here on a canoe trip with his family, Melissa (left) and Simeon (right).

A common question

What will happen to me if I don't pay my full tax bill to the government?

Based on the experience of other Conscientious Objectors to Military Taxation (COMTs), you will likely receive a notice from Revenue Canada stating that you owe them the amount you diverted.

When amounts of tax money diverted have reached into the hundreds, and after communication with Revenue Canada employees (who are most often friendly), some people have received letters threatening legal action.

Subsequently Revenue Canada has taken money back from some COMTs by means of garnisheed wages, deduction from tax refunds owed or withdrawals from accounts. COMTs have always had time to make a payment before collection occurs if they so choose.

Conscience Canada provides moral support and advice to COMTs throughout the process.



Jan Slakov, teacher
CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR TO MILITARY TAXATION

Depicted here after a ride with her daughter, Sophie, who said, "I laughed every time I saw her biking behind me."

"The greatest single assault on the environment, on all of us around the globe, comes from one agency . . . the Armed Forces of the United States."

Barry Sanders, *The Green Zone: The Environmental Costs of Militarism*

The environmental costs of war and militarism are horrendous

While the US military may be the largest contributor to environmental devastation, all war and militarism have serious consequences.

One example of the impact of war is the use of depleted uranium and its effect on humans.

Dr. Ahmad Hardan served as a special scientific adviser to the World Health Organization, the United Nations and the Iraqi Ministry of Health. He says there is scientific evidence linking depleted uranium (DU) to cancer and birth defects.

Jomma Khan, a villager from northeastern Afghanistan speaks of the effects of DU.

"When I saw my deformed grandson," he told an interviewer in March of 2003, "I realized that my hopes of the future have vanished for good. [This is] different from the hopelessness of the Russian barbarism, even though at that time I lost my older son Shafiqullah. This time, however, I know we are part of the invisible genocide brought on us by America, a silent death from which I know we will not escape."

Although the Canadian military no longer uses DU weapons, much of the uranium which gets trans-



Nature is our source of life. Let's protect this natural beauty from the ravages of the military industrial complex.

formed into these weapons comes from Canada.

Other countries which have DU weapons include France, Russia, Pakistan, India, and China. Belgium has banned DU weapons and the Latin American Parliament voted for a moratorium on its use.

For more info on the ecological effects of militarism, contact Conscience Canada (see back page).

Five simple steps

1. Connect with others

It's easier and more meaningful to join with others. Conscience Canada may help find such people.

2. Get online forms

In addition to your regular tax form, download the *Peace Tax Return* from the Taxes page at **www.consciencecanada.ca**. This unofficial Conscience Canada form can help explain your action.

3. Calculate

Complete your tax form down to the line Balance Due. Then go back to the Net Federal Tax line and calculate a percentage* of the amount on that line (this is your portion of federal tax dollars that go to the military). Deduct this amount from your Balance Due. (*See the *Peace Tax Return* for percentage.)

4. Write two cheques

Send one cheque along with your tax return in the amount of your revised Balance Due.

Send a second cheque for the remaining balance to Conscience Canada, made out to "Conscience Canada Peace Tax Fund." This money will be held in trust and can be returned should you request it, see address on page 16. This allows you to document that you paid the tax, but redirected it. Alternately, you can send your peace tax portion to a peace or veterans group of your choice.

The Peace Tax Return is available for download from consciencecanada.ca.

Even if people choose not to divert taxes, it can still be used to register opposition to military spending.

It supports the extension of CO legislation to include everyone's right to redirect military taxes to nonviolent conflict resolution.



5. Send letters

See the *Peace Tax Form* for info on sending letters to Conscience Canada and government officials.

Note:

If you owe no tax, have a refund coming to you, or are not prepared to withhold a tax payment, the *Peace Tax Return* still provides a way of telling the government that you oppose military spending.

Questions?

Contact Conscience Canada, see the back page.

Additional options

I just can't get myself to divert my taxes. Are there other options?

1. Fill out and send Part A of the *Peace Tax Return*, found at consciencecanada.ca.
2. Find the report entitled, "Non-violent alternatives to Canadian peace and security" at the website, consciencecanada.ca. Read it and discuss with friends and family.
3. Write to the Prime Minister and your MP to voice your objection to the increased militarization of our country.
4. Contribute time or money to Conscience Canada to help them with their work.
5. Put on the 40-minute play called "S-T-O-P." A free script is available at consciencecanada.ca. It blends information and humour and revolves around income tax, military spending, the Raging Grannies peace marches and Afghanistan.
6. Research other possible connections to military activity in your life, e.g., your investments or goods possibly obtained by violent means.

Policy change is one goal of Conscientious Objection to Military Taxation.

Conscience Canada and other organizations are pushing for legislation that would allow Canadians to legally direct the military portion of their taxes to a peace fund. Or, alternatively, to direct all their tax money to non-military purposes.

Co-sponsors:



Mennonite Central Committee Canada
canada.mcc.org/peace/projects/canadaarmed



Christian Peacemaker Teams
cpt.org



Mennonite Church Canada
mennonitechurch.ca

geez

Geez magazine
geezmagazine.org

Cover photo: F-16 afterburner takeoff, Hampshire, England, by Tom Green, flickr.com/tgigreeny



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Conscience Canada has worked since 1978 to

- increase awareness of the connection between taxes and war
- divert taxes away from war
- support creative nonviolent conflict prevention and resolution, and
- promote conscientious objection legislation.

We ask the government to respect the “freedom of conscience and religion” in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and allow Canadians to pay taxes according to the dictates of their conscience.

DVD available

Work for Peace... Stop Paying for War

This 10-minute DVD about Conscientious Objection to Military Taxation features former B.C. Supreme Court Justice Thomas R. Berger, MP Bill Siksay, Hon. Jean Augustine and the experiences of three average Canadians. Also available on YouTube. Download presenter’s notes and discussion guide at **www.consciencecanada.ca**