

Conscience Canada
Nonviolent Alternatives to Canadian Defence
and Security
Summary – July 2004

**"We demand our governments renounce
violence and war.
Instead prepare for peace through justice for
all citizens of the world."**
*Final Statement of the 4th World Social Forum
held in Mumbai (India) 16-21 January 2004*

Introduction

In the spring 2004, Conscience Canada invited its members from coast to coast to consider wide questions that relate to Canadian defence and security. Fifteen communities responded and close to 250 people participated in the dialogue.

CC Board undertook this initiative because, since we believe that there is no 'just war,' we must help determine future directions of Canada's foreign affairs and defence policies to provide nonviolent, humane and effective means for settling conflicts. We believe that we must move from the position that peace is desirable (if possible,) to the position that peace is necessary and possible, and we must find out how.

What is Security?

The consensus was that security is provided by building a just world and responding to basic human needs such as food, clean water, shelter, education, health care, clean air, a healthy environment and that it needs a reordering of governmental and economic priorities away from the military/ industrial/ research complex, including replacing the Ministry of Defence with a Ministry of Peace still under the overall mandate of Foreign Affairs. Justice and fairness are at once the product of, and the conditions for peace, order and good government domestically and internationally.

Defence and Foreign Affairs

We use the three concepts which are key to present Canadian defence policy: '**development**', '**diplomacy**' and '**defence**,' referring to the three foreign policy pillars – *prosperity, security, Canadian values* -- as our framework. All the participant groups indicated that development and diplomacy are the main tools that Canada should use, and that these tools should provide the meaning and direction of defence.

In the **development field**, the recommendations are that Canada invests the full amount of international help it has pledged to the international community. Its focus should be to increase local autonomy, protect food and water self-sufficiency, stimulate medical research, support non-violent movements in conflict areas, develop green energy. A vigorous stand in the development and conservation fields would also increase employment at home and abroad, and would require the termination of all subsidies to manufacturers of weapons or weapons components. This kind of development policy would also properly *build a sustainable prosperity*, since we know that Canada can fully enjoy security and prosperity only in so far as the rest of the world can partake in it.

Canadian diplomacy is crucial to the solidity of the second pillar of Canada's foreign policy – *security*-- as well as for the promotion of universal values of peace, dignity, and justice. Canadian diplomacy should be deployed to set up mechanisms for early detection and de-escalation of potential conflicts and to train an international non-violent police force in the spirit of the prevention roles indicated in the report *The Responsibility to Protect – The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty* report of December 2001. Diplomacy would require that Canada replace all weapons research, production, sale, deployment and use with support of organizations studying and promoting disarmament and non-violent conflict settlement.

Canadian defence was redefined by the participants in these dialogues as representing the fundamental *Canadian values* 'defending the world from hunger, cold, aggression, ignorance. We ask that Canada move towards full conversion from military to civilian defence; to shifting the focus to non-violence, to conflict prevention, transformation, resolution, conciliation, mediation; to understanding underlying causes and reasons for conflicts. We ask that Canada initiate a full and transparent assessment of the negative impacts, loss of opportunities and costs of research, production and use of military equipment.

Alternatives for security and defence

A solid consensus among the participants is that **Canada's right to self-determination** (often called Canada's sovereignty) cannot be effectively or efficiently defended militarily from any significant invasion or from the appropriations of our resources.

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Some of the alternative defence strategies suggested are to develop a sustainable, local and richly diversified national economy; increase the political will to refuse to bend to threats; move towards unarmed civilian defence; deflate the myth of 'terrorism'; de-legitimize war domestically and internationally; strengthen the conviction in the centrality of common and global human security; lessen the world's economic and opportunity disparities and simplify our lifestyle, restoring and maintaining the health of the global environment; build on the present abundance of small peace and justice groups that coalesce in times of emergency towards the creation of a stable and permanent critical mass that would come to the fore as the present violent structures are more and more explicitly repudiated. The defence of human rights *is* our best defence.

Canada must change the definition of 'defence' and of 'army'; reduce and reallocate the military budget with a view to a full conversion from military to non-armed, non-violent civil defence. This conversion would also imply stopping arms research, production and trade. We must adopt the six principles of the UN *Manifesto 2000 for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence* as the guiding principles of Canadian foreign policy. The Manifesto for a Culture of Peace would also guide a 'Ministry of Peace' that would replace the Ministry of National Defence. Military alliances such as NATO and NORAD are perceived as obsolete and more a hindrance to, than a protection of Canada's right to self-determination.

It is in the recognition that we are citizens of a complex and interrelated world that Canada's **international peacekeeping role** can best be defined. Canada would become the most secure and the most helpful country around the world if it were to re-establish its credibility as a peace-maker; shift trade agreements to favour human security and sustainable development for the whole world; refocus all its international missions radically to peaceful interventions and abandon all forcefully offensive or defensive action; undertake only peaceful, non-military, multilateral peacekeeping missions; develop strict terms of reference never to be transgressed for its peacekeepers and international missions.

Canada could be very helpful in conflict zones if our envoys were deliberately trained for peacekeeping/ conflict resolution. In the immediate future, it was suggested that Canada initiate a coalition for peace in Iraq using groups such as the Peace Brigades or the Christian Peacemaker Teams as models for the type of intervention needed. This would provide an alternative to the equally unacceptable positions of doing nothing, and responding with armed force, which was mentioned in a number of communities.

The participants also addressed the issue of how to respond to **domestic emergencies**. They were unanimous in their assessment that only civilian, non-violent institutions should be charged with this mandate. Local multi- skilled personnel and generic use equipment could be supplemented by more specialized teams and equipment based in centrally located communities across the country for rapid dispatching to the scene of the disaster. We already have the nuclei for such emergency forces responding to forest fires, ice storms, chemical spills, epidemics or floods. This approach would provide more robust, constant and flexible security to the whole country and could eventually also supply rapid and specific response to international calamities. It could also play a role in environmental reclamation.

Priorities and Conclusion

Collectively, as Conscience Canada, we undertake to work for the enactment of a Conscientious Objection Act in Parliament, to present the results of the CC dialogues to the Federal Government, to promote the establishment of a Department of Peace, and to prevent Canada's participation in any aspect of the US Ballistic Missile Defence project.

Individually, we commit to adopt a culture of peace and non-violence in our personal, family and community lives, to promote peace education and to work on a permanent basis to de-legitimize wars and conflicts.

War as an institution and all that nourishes it must be totally and completely rejected. This report provides strong and credible options Canada could adopt for non-violent international, national and personal security and conflict resolution.