

CONSCIENCE CANADA



“Everyone has the following fundamental freedoms: freedom of conscience and religion...”
2a Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Constitution Act, 1981

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Preparing to Lobby for Conscience

Editorial: Jan Slakov, Secretary of CC

One of the great benefits of working actively with Conscience Canada (CC) is getting to explore, with others, a crucial question for our time: What is nonviolence?

We know it goes much deeper than simply refusing to kill. Or perhaps, because it is virtually impossible to live in our world without causing some death somewhere, it involves mainly a deep commitment to strive to see "that of God" or "the piece of the truth" in each being; to respect each other and the earth we all depend on for life.

Preparing for our upcoming lobby effort has entailed some deep questioning for me. I will need to make a plane trip to join the others; will the use of fossil fuels be justified, in a world where people are being killed for the sake of access to oil?

I'm still not sure, but this lobby effort and opportunity to meet other board members for the first time face to face feels like the natural "next step" for us...In some ways it seems comparable to a much bigger choice, the choice to bring new life into the world. From one point of view, such a choice could be seen as irresponsible. Already we are exceeding the earth's carrying capacity...and what horrors might these children face in the not too distant future?

But still we rejoice in new life; how could that be wrong?

In both cases, we cannot know what the outcome of our effort (to raise a child, or to join in the CC lobby effort) will be. This, suggests Joanna Macy, is part of what life in this time is all about:

"From our own life experience, we know there's never a guarantee – whether we're falling in love, or going into labour to birth a baby, or devoting ourselves to a piece of land, turning the soil and watching for rain. We don't ask for proof that we'll succeed and that everything will turn out as we want. We just go ahead, because life wants to live through us!

...And we might not pull it off. There's no guarantee that this tremendous shift [to a sustainable, nonviolent world] will kick in before our life support systems unravel irretrievably. Actually, the very fact that there's no guarantee of success is what will draw forth our greatest courage and creativity. If I could give you a pill or potion to convince you that everything is going to be okay, that would hardly elicit your purest creativity and chutzpah."

In closing, I'd like to thank the other board members for welcoming this questioning and for sharing my concerns. ☺

Table of Contents - CC NSL Spring 05 # 88

p. 1	Editorial
p. 2	Edith Adamson: Walking one's talk for peace
p. 3	"No more deaths": At the Arizona-Mexico border
p. 4	Excerpts from COMT letters
p. 5	Peace tax: How to do it
p. 7	AGM announcement/CC Ottawa lobby
p. 8	Membership renewal

"[...A]ll governments...even the most autocratic ones, even tyrannies, 'rest on consent'. [...T]he fallacy lies in the equation of consent with obedience. An adult consents where a child obeys; if an adult is said to obey, he actually 'supports' the organization or the authority or the law that claims 'obedience'." - Hannah Arendt

Walking One's Talk for Peace: Edith Adamson (1913-2004)

Marilyn Hébert

At the age of 82, Edith Adamson described herself as "a voice for peace". Those who knew her depicted Edith as a woman who would strongly motivate, loudly proclaim and persist until action was taken. Some maybe even found her to be pushy! However, no one could accuse her of not practicing what she preached. Kate Penner put it this way in a Conscience Canada (CC) newsletter: "Edith is indeed a role model to all those who struggle with issues of conscience and how to balance their ideas with their actions". In other words, "Edith always walked her talk".

In 1944, when for the first time, Edith realized that she was to pay income taxes, she immediately did her homework, only to find that the military portion of the government budget covered half of the entire budget. Shocked by this finding as well as by the income tax documentation which referred only to 'he' this and 'he' that, Edith concluded that 'she' was exempt from paying taxes and thus could get out of paying to kill!

In 1975, Edith moved to Victoria where she became passionately active in social causes, mostly related to peace-not-war and environmental protection. Energized in 1978 by the Special Session on Disarmament at the United Nations and motivated by a desire to contribute to a peaceful world for her grandchildren and "all earth's children", Edith, along with Dorothy Wesber and Dr Ian Gibson, founded the Peace Tax Fund Committee (later to become Conscience Canada) and was acting President for at least a dozen years.

One of Edith's deep convictions – in line with her 1944 civil disobedience – was that taxpayers who conscientiously object to killing should have the right to withhold the portion of tax going to military purposes and to place it in a fund for peace. Inspired by US and British peace tax movements, Edith worked to obtain full recognition for the first freedom guaranteed in the *Constitution Act* of 1982, namely that of freedom of conscience. For her this initiative was a logical follow-up to the exemptions from military service (and possibility of alternate service) granted to conscientious objectors over the past 200 years of Canadian history. With this in mind, Edith traveled across Canada several times and brought her concern to various groups, as well as to representatives of the government of Canada.



In 1983, Edith helped raise money for the first test case of freedom of conscience and religion: that of Dr. Jerilynn Prior who, beginning in 1986, took the peace tax issue all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Did Edith ever feel a little guilty for having refused, for feminist and pacifist reasons, to pay income tax back in the 1940s? Probably not! For when it became clear that Revenue Canada had the right to collect unpaid taxes, Edith encouraged readers to use all kinds of legal means in order to lower their tax liability, and urged them to sign the petition supporting the private member's bill to establish a Peace Trust Fund as a legislative provision for directing military taxes to peace.

In 2001, due to macular degeneration, which made her legally blind, Edith resigned from her position as President Emerita on the Board of Conscience Canada.

Former MP Svend Robinson, the first recipient of the Edith Adamson Award, observed that Edith was a woman "who has made a difference for all of us, to the kind of country that we are, to the community and people that we are". He thanked her for her inspiration and leadership. To which we can add our thanks to Edith for always walking her talk.

Indeed, a few questions Edith's life poses can be expressed as follows:

- In what ways is Conscience Canada walking its talk for peace and thus following in the footsteps of Edith Adamson? (Lots of possible answers!)
- How might we better motivate people to join with us in making real our verbal commitment to peace?

Your ideas and suggestions would be very welcome. ☺

The board of directors of Conscience Canada would like to re-instate the Edith Adamson Award to a peace activist opposing militarism. The last time this award was made was in 2001. Is there anyone out there who is willing to help us determine a credible and thorough selection process and prepare the award ceremony? Please contact us if this type of ad hoc involvement appeals to you!

“No More Deaths”: At the Arizona-Mexico Border

Murray Lumley

I spent eight weeks (July & August, 2004) with Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) in the Arizona-Mexico border region, near Douglas, Arizona, and its larger Mexican "twin" city – Agua Prieta. Our purpose was to peacefully confront violence (by rancher vigilantes, "coyote" guides, bandits, and Border Patrol officers) directed at migrants from Central America as they cross the Mexico-US border.

The US has no provision to allow unskilled workers into the US, but the migrants are crossing in the millions every year. Since border policies were implemented in the 1990s, it is estimated that over 3,000 migrants have lost their lives on the US/Mexico border, primarily from heatstroke, dehydration, hypothermia, exposure, and homicide.

Some of the economic and political reasons for the dilemma in which Mexican families find themselves are apparent at the maquiladoras or Free Trade Zone factories in nearby Nogales, Mexico. Profits made in the beautiful new factory structures I saw benefit primarily the multinational companies that built them. Thanks to low or non-existent corporate taxation and government corruption, Mexicans are left with minimal services (e.g. lack of paved roads, clean water and sewage). NAFTA only exacerbates this injustice.

The situation is also grim for small farmers throughout Mexico. The world market price is so low that it doesn't cover the cost of growing coffee. North American and European Union farm subsidies, along with free trade, mean that grains are dumped into Mexico cheaper than Mexican farmers can grow them.

As a result of these factors and the fact that Mexicans are no longer allowed to move freely back and forth across the border without a distance-limiting visa, the only option for some is to get jobs in the US, sending remittances back to

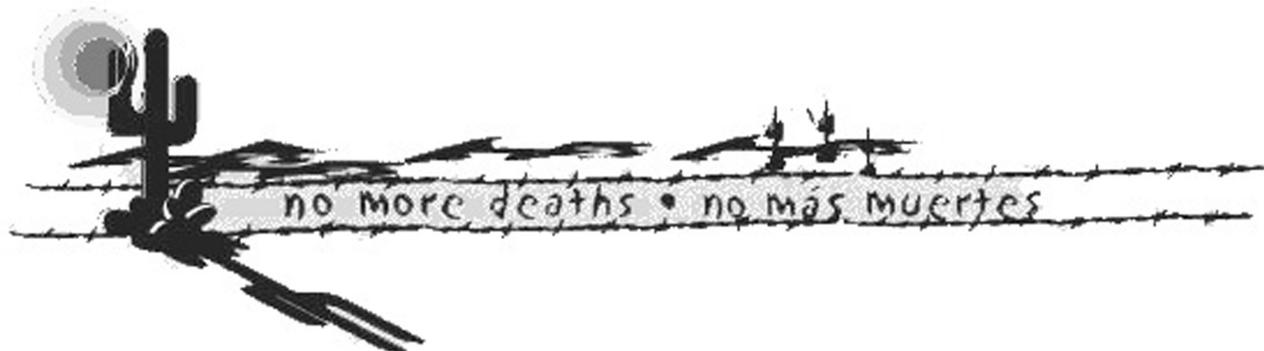
their families. With perhaps 15 million Hispanic residents now in the US, this money represents the second highest revenue generator (oil is first) for Mexico. Even with low pay, no benefits, and no compensation for injury, jobs in the US are better than what migrants can find in Mexico.

US employers are rarely prosecuted as "big business" welcomes the cheap labour. The hypocrisy of this situation is evident. Some commentators have concluded that the whole incredibly expensive Border Patrol exercise is nothing but an elaborate show to convince Americans that anti-migrant action is being taken, while still allowing for business to profit from the cheap labour.

Douglas, a city of 15 thousand (94% Mexican-American), has the largest Border Patrol station in the US – about 700 officers. Officers can search property and homes without a warrant as US constitutional guarantees are suspended for 25-30 miles north of the border. Residents caught helping migrants (leaving food and water, offering rides, etc.) face penalties such as seizure of their vehicle.

These penalties and the harassment of local Hispanic-American residents create a climate of fear. Even with extensive deterrents such as border walls and fences lit up all night, officers roaring about (creating ecological damage) in their SUVs, vibration sensors, and unmanned surveillance drones, the Border Patrol believes that they only catch about 5 to 10 percent of migrants, most of whom they just send back across the border.

We patrolled the desert by foot, bicycle, and vehicle, providing food and water to any migrants we could find. With the help of our partners, we set up and staffed an "Ark" or sanctuary in two different locations in the desert – consisting of a loaned recreation vehicle and tent, equipped with



bags of food donated by Tucson church people and jugs of water of various sizes. The Ark also served as a visible token of resistance to US immigration policies, emboldening some of our partners from Douglas and Bisbee. Another task we undertook was to fill large blue plastic water tanks in the Mexican desert, a task accomplished on the US side by volunteers from Tucson churches. We also did public witnesses such as memorials for migrants who had died in the desert plus a combined worship service of Americans and Mexicans on both sides of the "ugly fence".



Crosses in memory of Enrique and unidentified body in the Cochise County. Enrique was a 30 year old from Aguascalientes who died due to exposure.

One partial solution, advocated by US Senator Ted Kennedy and others, would be to have the US provide temporary worker visas of a few months duration – that would allow some to work in the US and then return home to use the money for home improvements, education, etc. Another strategy is the involvement by one of our Arizona partners in a fair trade coffee co-op where coffee grown in Chiapas by local farmers and marketed from Agua Prieta provides farmers and workers much more than they would receive from multinationals – allowing them to stay in Mexico. ☺

More information:

- <http://justcoffee.org>
- <http://www.nomoredeaths.org>
- <http://www.derechoshumanosaz.net/deaths.htm>
- <http://www.borderlinks.org/bl/whatsnew/ReadingPacket.htm>
- <http://www.immigrationforum.org/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabid=231>

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children.”
 - US President Dwight Eisenhower, 1953

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Excerpts from Conscientious Objectors' Communication with the Government

The United Nations has declared the current decade as the International Decade for the Promotion of the Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World. Let's be unified in upholding this declaration. We can make it happen.
 - Sue Newman, Salt Spring Island, BC

As a follower of Jesus, I try to live by His commandment to "Love Our Enemies"...I find it highly inconsistent to Pray for peace and Pay for War.
 - Benno Barg, Kitchener, ON

I have been ... extremely supportive of Canada's refusal to join the United States in its invasion of Iraq, but feel strongly that this is not enough. We need to take a new path altogether, educating our children for peace not war, withdrawing from the arms trade, closing all military establishments.
 - Jo Vellacott, Kingston, ON

Providing Canadians with the option of directing taxes to either military purposes or creative peace-building alternatives could take democracy to a whole new level. In this spirit I am exercising what I believe to be a democratic right by redirecting a portion of my federal income tax to the *Conscience Canada Peace Tax Fund in Trust*.
 - Will Braun, Winkler, MB

"Militarism and violence in society feed on each other in a self-perpetuating cycle. The child is father of the man, and the mother of the woman. Violence designed into toys, watched on television and in sports, as well as violence observed among neighbours and in the street, if not countered to provide a more balanced view of the darker and lighter side of living in this world, is believed by the child to be normal, acceptable and even advisable. Tomorrows political leaders, Supreme Court judges, managers of industry, school teachers, are today's children, absorbing what society permits them to absorb."
 - Daphne Davey, Charlottetown, PEI

Taxes for Peace: Here's How to Do It

Until a CO Bill has passed into legislation, Conscience Canada provides a positive option for *Conscientious Objectors to Military Taxation (COMT)*. In this way they can deposit that portion of their income taxes into a Peace Tax Trust Fund as a formal objection to paying to kill.

For the Fiscal Year ending March 31, 2004 we calculated the proportion of the federal government expenditures used by the Department of National Defence as reflected in the Public Accounts of Canada (2003/2004). On this basis, the expenditure of DND was \$13,195,694,000 – (an increase of \$767,879,000 over 2003) representing 7.88% of the total government expenditures of \$167,465,687,000.

In accordance with the resolution made at the CC AGM in 2003, we based our calculation on the

actual expenditures of DND. To do a comprehensive calculation, we would need to identify expenditures related to the military in a number of government's departments (e.g. Veterans Affairs, promotion of "defence production", or the military portion of the debt) but at present we do not have the means to carry out such research. Even with this very conservative approach, the percentage of the total Canadian expenses going to military pursuits is almost 8%.

PLEASE NOTE: If you have all your taxes deducted at source, as most taxpayers do, you can deposit a symbolic amount in the Fund and write a letter documenting your objection to parliamentarians (see below). You can also support the work and goals of CC by becoming a member (see form on back of newsletter).

continued on next page →

Redirecting Military Taxes to the Conscience Canada Peace Tax Fund

1. Complete your Income Tax Form as usual, down to Balance Due.
2. Go back to Net Federal Tax line. Calculate 7.88% of the amount you entered on this line.
3. Make out a cheque for this amount to Conscience Canada Peace Tax Fund In Trust, and send it to *Conscience Canada, 901-70 Mill St. Toronto, ON M5A 4R1*. Be sure to make a copy for your records. Please specify if you want the interest on your deposit kept segregated or if it can be used by CC for its operations.
4. Write a letter (see sample letter and relevant quotes on following pages) to Ralph Goodale, Minister of Finance, House of Commons, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6, telling why you wish to have your taxes supporting peace rather than killing, teaching others to kill, making and selling lethal weapons, and preparing for war. Indicate that you have directed the military portion of your income taxes to the Peace Tax Fund in Trust. Make seven copies of this letter.
5. Send the following to your local Tax Centre:
 - your completed Income Tax form, your cheque to the Receiver General for the Balance Due (less the amount of the cheque derived from step #3),
 - a copy of the cheque in #3, and
 - a copy of your letter to the Minister.
6. Send the original letter to the Minister of Finance and a copy to Conscience Canada for possible use in the newsletter.
7. Send other copies of your letter (postage free to House of Commons, Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6) or via email to the following MPs:
 - Hon. John McCallum, Minister of Revenue, mccallum.j@parl.gc.ca;
 - Stephen Harper, Leader of the New Conservative Party, harper.s@parl.gc.ca;
 - Gilles Duceppe, Leader of the Bloc Quebecois, duceppe.g@parl.gc.ca;
 - Jack Layton, Leader of the New Democratic Party, layton.j@parl.gc.ca;
 - Alexa McDonough, mcdonough.a@parl.gc.ca
 - your own MP
8. You may also wish to write to your local newspaper and/or to Canadian magazines of your choice, to the same effect. Send your letters addressed to the Editor. ☮



Taxes for Peace *continued*

We cannot guarantee that you will not be subject to collection by Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA) from your bank account, garnishee from salary, or seizure of goods and chattels for the amount they consider in "arrears."

In the event of collection by CCRA or at any time, CC will refund you your deposit upon your request, and also the accrued interest if you have so specified. Conscience Canada may be unable to cover the full amount of interest CCRA may charge you on these arrears, as their interest rate is usually higher than the amount we obtain on the Trust Account.

So far, to our knowledge, no goods and chattels have been seized in Canada for non-payment of war taxes. In general, only large amounts (over several hundred dollars) have been seized. Some COMTs have had collection in following years from tax refunds. By now, all COMTs have likely had GST refunds seized. ☺

"Civil disobedience is not our problem. Our problem is civil obedience. Our problem is that numbers of people all over the world have obeyed the dictates of the leaders of their government and have gone to war, and millions have been killed because of this obedience...Our problem is that people are obedient all over the world in the face of poverty and starvation and stupidity, and war, and cruelty. Our problem is that people are obedient while the jails are full of petty thieves, and all the while the grand thieves are running and robbing the country. That's our problem."
 - Howard Zinn, *Failure to Quit*

Sample letter to Minister of Finance

Dear Minister Goodale,

The USA invasion of Iraq is a chilling confirmation, if ever there was a need, that war and violence do not bring peace. Peace is the only way to peace. Canada's priorities are still skewed in favour of violent as opposed to nonviolent defence and security-building. Recognising the rights of conscientious objectors would be an important step towards changing Canada's priorities in the right direction.

As Edith Adamson, founder of Conscience Canada, pointed out: "War now depends more on money than on personnel; it only took twelve men to drop the bomb over Hiroshima, but it took millions, perhaps billions, of taxpayers' dollars in Canada, Britain and the United States to develop that bomb." (1982) Governments need to conscript our money, not our bodies, to fight modern wars.

We cannot in conscience bear arms ourselves, and paying someone else to do the killing in our name is possibly even more objectionable. In today's world, the only sincere way to respect our right to freedom of conscience is to provide alternative service for the military portion of our taxes, just as alternative service was provided to conscientious objectors (COs) in the past.

In order for our Freedom of Conscience to have real meaning, those of us, who cannot, in conscience, contribute to the military, need to be able to direct the military portion of our taxes to non-military means of security-building. The Private Member bill: 'Conscientious Objection Act' would provide such a choice without in any way interfering with the Government's fiscal powers. Since at present this is not yet the case and I cannot act against my conscience, I am sending the military portion of my taxes to Conscience Canada to be held in the Peace Tax Fund in Trust.

I am asking you to work to bring such a tax bill to a vote in the House. Such a tax provision is needed in order for Canada to respect its commitment to guarantee the right to freedom of conscience laid out in our Charter and make Canada again a leader for peace.

Sincerely,

(your signature and address)

OFFICIAL NOTICE: Conscience Canada Annual General Meeting (AGM)
6:00 PM, Thursday, February 24, 2005
Atrium, St. Paul University, 223 Main Street, Ottawa

During the same week as our meetings with Members of Parliament and senior Civil Servants, we will hold **Conscience Canada's 2005 Annual General Meeting** in Ottawa.

The agenda for the AGM is:

- 1) Approval of the Minutes of the AGM (available upon request)
- 2) Review of the work done by Conscience Canada during the year
- 3) Election or confirmation of board members*
- 4) Presentation and Acceptance of the 2004 financial statements (available upon request)
- 5) Appointment of auditors for 2005
- 6) Other business

* Note: The four officer positions required by our by-laws, and to be chosen from within the Board, are President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Secretary; in addition there can be Board members at large. Standing for re-election are: Dominique Boisvert, Joshua Mira Goldberg, Marilyn Hébert, Bruna Nota, Jan Slakov, and Don Woodside. The position of Treasurer is still vacant; nominations are welcome.

The present AGM notice, included in the newsletter and sent to all the members' addresses we have on record, is to be the official notice, as required by the by-laws. Let us know if you want to receive a copy of the by-laws electronically or by mail. ***If you cannot attend the Ottawa business meeting in person, please send your vote by proxy*** using the form on the next page.

The business meeting will be followed by a formal presentation of petitions to the Hon. Alexa McDonough, MP, for Parliamentary consideration.

All CC members and friends in the larger Ottawa area are warmly invited to attend the AGM and to join the Board, together with Ottawa peace and justice people, in an informal gathering and refreshments after the AGM. We hope to see many of you. For those who cannot attend, please make sure to send in the proxy form below or indicate your proxy by e-mail to consciencecanada@shaw.ca. ☺

Conscience Canada Ottawa Lobby

Bruna Nota, CC President

The Conscience Canada board decided that, after almost seven years since its last lobbying effort on Parliament Hill, it was time for a new one, to take place during the week of Feb. 21st. We have three CC members joining five Board members for this effort, the aim being to smooth the way for the eventual passing of a tax law that would allow conscientious objectors to legally pay the whole of their taxes for peaceful purposes. Having contacted over 50 Parliamentarians (MPs and Senators), we are hopeful that at least half will grant us an interview.

Our expectation is that the *Conscientious Objection Tax Bill* (# 232 when it was last presented to the House in Feb. 2001) will be tabled in the House again in this coming session and possibly even put to a vote. We also hope that a number of MPs from all – or at least most – parties will be willing to express their support for the bill.

The Hon. Alexa McDonough has accepted to sponsor the bill and we will present to her the many signatures (about 700 as of the time of writing) on the CC petition. It is not too late to collect more signatures and send them to CC. You can find the petition on our website (<http://www.consciencecanada.ca>) or you can request that blank copies be sent to you by mail.

We also expect to meet with a number of senior civil servants, particularly in the Finance Department to address any concerns they may still have from a procedural or technical point of view. We were told in 1998 that the present form of the bill addressed their concerns and that only political will stood in the way of the bill, but any help from civil servants in overcoming obstacles to reaching that political will is always welcome.

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We are very excited about this opportunity to dialogue with government officials – and each other (as the board has only been able to "meet" electronically since 2002). Again, we are asking Conscience Canada members, Peace Churches, friends and sympathizers to support these efforts by contacting their MPs to further the understanding of issues of conscience. Your letters and other communications encourage,

inspire and sometimes challenge us. Thank you! And all your financial donations are also very much appreciated, as there are costs associated with this lobby effort.

Following the lobby effort, on Feb. 24, we will be holding our AGM; we hope you will be able to join us there. If not, you can still participate by proxy as per the form below. ☮

"Perhaps to the soldier, the civilian is the man who employs him to kill, who includes the guilt of murder in the pay envelope and escapes responsibility."
 - Graham Greene, *The Quiet American*



MY CONSCIENCE AT WORK... SUBSCRIBE - RENEW TODAY

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 Phone: _____
 Email: _____

There are two ways to join:

- *Conscientious Objectors to Military Taxation (COMT)*: Member who has deposited funds into the Peace Tax Trust account maintained by CC.
- *Member*: Open to any person committed to furthering Conscience Canada's objectives and who pays an annual membership fee of \$10. This entitles you to receive CC's newsletters and to vote on all issues at the Annual General Meeting. (Please note: We intend to honour all "life memberships" dating from an earlier system.)

Annual membership: (\$10.00/yr): \$ _____
 Donations to Conscience Canada: \$ _____
 Peace Tax Trust Deposit (full or symbolic): \$ _____
 \$ _____ total funds enclosed
 (cheque payable to Conscience Canada)

Mail to: Conscience Canada, 901-70 Mill Street, Toronto, ON M5A 4R1
Address Correction Requested
 Please let us know if you desire more or fewer copies of the newsletter

Proxy Vote for 2005 AGM

I, _____ (please print), a member in good standing of Conscience Canada, do hereby grant my proxy vote for the Feb 24, 2005 Annual General Meeting of Conscience Canada to: _____ (please print) or, in their absence, to any director of Conscience Canada.

"La paix est le seul combat qui vaille d'être mené / Peace is the only battle worth waging." - Albert Camus