



# Conscience Canada

Work for peace. Defend the earth. Defund the military!

Œuvrons pour la paix. Défendons la Terre. Définançons l'armée!

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## A Pivotal Moment

by Jan Slakov

Conscientious objectors see how people can become weaponized and we know this isn't for us. We know that the means and the end are inextricably linked; maybe, in truth, there is no "end"; what matters is what we devote ourselves to now, and of all the things worth serving, surely it is the power of love or nonviolence.

As noted in our CC 2004 report on [Nonviolent Alternatives to Canadian Defence and Security](#), "justice and fairness are at once the product of, and the conditions for peace, order and good government domestically and internationally."

Now, when ecological breakdown is upon us, and nations with the most weaponry flaunt international law even more egregiously than before, the idea that we could somehow defend ourselves by training more citizens to fight with weapons, or by buying fighter jets or "Golden Dumbs" or submarines, or even by shipping more resources all over the world, is clearly outdated. As Maryse Azzaria pointed out in a recent letter to *Le Devoir*, the way so many of us go along with the push for massive increases in "defence" spending demonstrates a shocking lack of imagination.

We can get a sense of how much our imaginations have been hijacked when we consider an observation that rings all too true: "It's easier to imagine an end to the world than an end to capitalism" (quote attributed to Fredric Jameson and Slavoj Žižek)

Carving out space in our lives, in our society, for nonviolence is one way to enlarge our imaginations, one way to be, beyond the confines of being consumers or even citizens.



Dare we hope for more? The new Canadian Coalition for Nonviolent Defence – Coalition canadienne pour la défense non-violente (CCND-CCDN) challenges us to say yes<sup>1</sup>. And it seems that climate activists Zain Haq, as well as Extinction Rebellion co-founder Roger Hallam, also see possibility where so many see a prospect of inevitable failure. In a [youtube video](#) Hallam explains that he has a "major problem with what I call 'left defeatism'... a lot of progressive... people love explaining...why everything's hopeless... There's also a certain Newtonian simplicity about it, that the world is fixed." He'd like to

1. The CCDN-CCND has just launched their [new website here](#).

"suggest that agency is always possible... How history works is through enactment of the impossible, as it is seen at that time."

We hope items we share in this newsletter will help us imagine and act in ways that will bring about the kind of revolution we need.

## On the Importance of Nonviolence

Letter to Prime Minister Carney, by Bruna Nota:

Dear Prime Minister Mark Carney,

As a devout Catholic you may have heard Pope Leo's Peace message to disarm and prepare for unarmed world peace. I add the [link right here](#) to refresh your memory.

It has been well documented that nonviolence is twice as effective as violent interventions and much more durable (below I attach one such study). Nonviolence certainly adds to the wellbeing of the people and of the planet. As with violence, it has to be learned and practiced, but at much less cost and rather than trauma the result of its adoption is increased enjoyment of life for all concerned and an intact natural world.

In concrete terms, I ask you to allocate a percentage of the military budget to nonviolent training of the armed forces as well as a more general fund for nonviolence education of civil servants and public officers and eventually, the whole Canadian population.

The immediate stimulus for this letter, in addition to Pope Leo's address, is my recent reading of two books.

One is "America, América: A New History of the New World" by Greg Grandin (2025). It gives a chilling overview of the violent conquest of the American continents. The legacies continue to this day. For my purpose today, I direct your attention to the chapter "Death and The Salesman" (pp.401-414) and p. 448 in the chapter "Hell Bent for Reelection".

The other book is "From Apartheid to Democracy: A Blueprint for Peace in Israel-Palestine" by Michael Schaeffer Omer-Man and Sarah Leah Whitson (2025). This short book is aspirational but offers practical, detailed, and potentially an effective guide for peace in Israel-Palestine. As I read it became evident to me that its success demands many pre-conditions, but one imposed itself on me: that a large enough portion of the population in the whole Territory become acquainted with nonviolence. And this familiarity could start to be built immediately as part of the necessary reconstruction process in Israel, in Gaza and in the West Bank Occupied Territories.



This same process could be applied to Canada today. We are at present one of the targets of a rapacious neighbour. Canada should increase with urgency its citizens' ability to face conflicts and strife with increasingly creative nonviolent ways. In this way, if the time for concrete steps comes, a large portion of the citizenry is well versed in the many tools that nonviolence provides. Hence my recommendation that a meaningful portion of the expanded military budget be dedicated to nonviolence training of expanding portions of the population, from school children to generals. And if no aggression occurs, we will all be richer for having adopted ways of addressing personal and societal conflicts with peaceful and constructive means.

## News and Nexus

### Two Letters

Published in *le Devoir*, by Maryse Azzaria

#### A lack of imagination

Québec, Dec. 29, 2025

"Make sure that defence spending creates good jobs". Under this title, McGill professor of economy and international development Francesco Amodio writes, in *Le Devoir* (29 Dec.): "Defence spending is seen as a lever for supporting short term activity and long-term growth, especially thanks to research and development investment." By redirecting public investment towards research and innovation, this spending stimulates private investment, productivity and long-term growth.

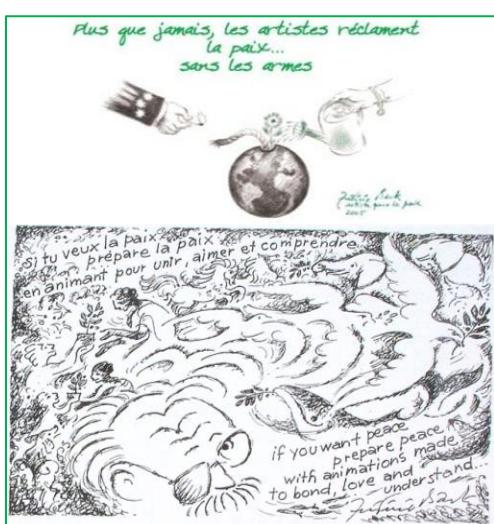
Why not direct research and innovation to other sectors, not military spending? I find our collective lack of imagination aberrant. There are so many areas which could benefit from research and innovation. Health, environment and housing are obvious examples. Investing in militarism amounts to investing in destruction. What about our commitment to building a better world?



#### In Memory of Serge Mongeau

*le Devoir* published another of Maryse's letters, of particular importance for our organization: With the passing of Serge Mongeau, I'd like to highlight the importance of letters-to-the-editor. It was thanks to one of Serge's letters in *le Devoir* in 1991, that I joined *Nos impôts pour la paix* (NIPP – "our taxes for peace") and I continue to be a member of *Conscience Canada*, which amalgamated with NIPP. The idea that our taxes ought never be used for war-making is even more relevant today. How

can our government consider increasing military spending when we see daily the horrors caused by how weapons are used? In memory of Serge, who advocated de-growth, it's essential not to grow our military arsenal.



### Art for peace

Thanks to Pierre Jasmin, accomplished pianist, professor and devoted secretary of [Artistes pour la paix](#) (Artists for Peace), for sharing this drawing by renowned filmmaker, Frédéric Back, who commented: "Art for peace is a magnificent symbol, tireless in its ability to communicate, regardless of any borders or walls. Everyone seeks happiness and peace, but these are only obtained through generosity."

## Something to Celebrate!

In 2025 the Canadian Peace Museum was given a building and surrounding land in Bancroft, Ontario. The ground floor of the building is set to [open in 2026](#) thanks to the efforts of volunteers, who are renovating the building with the help of donations from across the country.

Check out Peace Museum Executive Director Chris Houston's free weekly "[Stories of Peace](#)" column (to view stories without subscribing just scroll down the webpage).

### Not Celebrating:

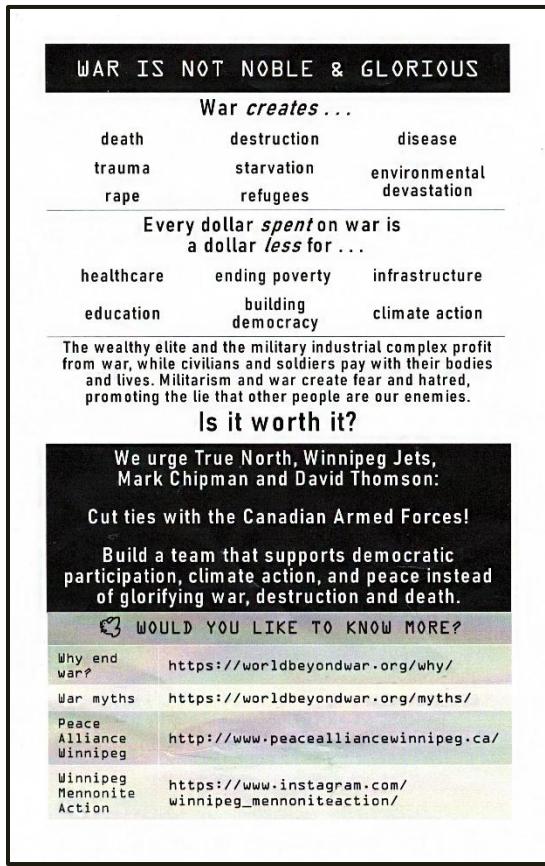
Via the Canadian Peace Museum Executive Director Chris Houston's Bluesky account, we learn that, for the first time in 33 years, an omnibus motion on humanitarianism at the UN didn't pass by consensus. The US was the only nation voting against the motion, with 6 others abstaining and 153 (including Canada) voting 'yes'

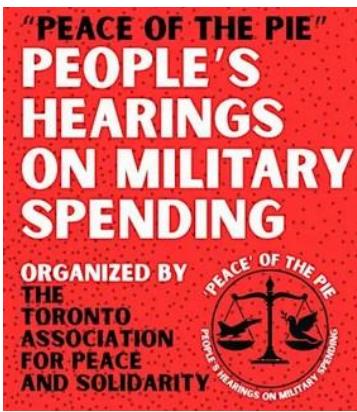


The Canadian Peace Museum in Bancroft

## No More Dollars for Death

Peace Alliance Winnipeg and Mennonite Action, including four CC members, participated in distributing pamphlets at a Winnipeg Jets hockey game on January 13<sup>th</sup>. The Canadian Armed Forces were sponsoring the NHL game. Below are the front and back of the pamphlet. As they point out, "Militarism and war create fear and hatred, promoting the lie that other people are our enemies" and asking, "Is it worth it?"





## Peace of the Pie

Conscience Canada's Bruna Nota and Murray Lumley along with people from several other peace groups participated in a People's Hearing on Military Spending held in September in Toronto.

Murray comments: "The program and presentations by the various organizations were excellent. I wish more people could have heard and seen them. There is to be a video released I was told; I assume by TAPS (Toronto Association for Peace & Solidarity)." And now we can report that [the video is out and available](#).



Bruna and Murray at the Conscience Canada table at Peace of the Pie

## Worth Repeating

### The Wall Between

In 2023 FOR-USA hosted [a conversation with the Jewish and Palestinian co-authors](#) of the book, *The Wall Between: What Jews and Palestinians Don't Want to Know About Each Other*. Here is part of a response to a question about how the authors see dialogue as essential for mutual liberation:

"The key is to try to understand the essence of what someone is getting at. So if, for instance, a Palestinian or a Palestinian supporter says Israel is nothing more than a settler colonial project, this is an un-nuanced statement. This misses the complexities of what Zionism is. Zionism is a liberation program, in part. Zionism ... is a Jewish national project and it was created primarily by European men whose only model for an expansionist idea was colonialism and they themselves speak the word 'colonialism' ... because that was the perspective that they knew ... The effects of Zionism on Palestinians are similar to settler colonial impacts ... Yet if you're going to say to someone you want to dialogue with who has a stake in maintaining safety for Jews in the land between the river and the sea, you need to be able to understand that Zionism is not ... a typical settler colonial project. ... And when you say to a Jew 'it's nothing more than settler-colonialism' they will most likely experience that as a denial of their right to exist and unless we understand those nuances you're not going to be able to have a conversation."



Authors Jeffrey Wilkinson & Raja Khouri in conversation with Ariel Gold, executive director of FOR-USA



Basir with his family, 2021

## Collective Healing

"We must imagine new infrastructures for collective healing, spaces where violence is neither politicized nor normalized but understood, dismantled, and replaced with relational justice. What is needed is an **Institute of Nonviolence** rooted in **polyvocalism**, where no one speaks for anyone, where every voice is heard in its own clarity, and where power is redistributed across relationships rather than concentrated in institutions."

~ Basir Bita, [What happens to a Society That Watches an Execution](#)

## Hope

Climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe quoting Jane Goodall: "I'm about to leave the world and leave it behind me with all the mess, whereas young people have to grow up into it, that's why they need every bit of help they can. If they succumb to the doom and gloom, which many have, **then they lose hope. If you lose hope, that's the end.** Because if you don't hope that there's a way out, if you don't hope that your actions can make a difference, then you sink into apathy and do nothing," she said. The best tribute we can offer is to follow her lead: act with courage, lead with kindness, and never give up hope.



Katharine Hayhoe  
with Jane Goodall,  
2015 Paris COP

## A B O U T

This newsletter is produced by Conscience Canada, an NGO working since 1978 to empower our members and all of society:

- to assert their conscientious objection to having their money conscripted, and earth's resources exploited, to pay for war and preparation for war;
- to champion the peace and well-being of all humankind; and
- to demand an end to all complicity and support for war and militarism

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions of Conscience Canada. This newsletter is available on-line at [www.consciencecanada.ca](http://www.consciencecanada.ca). If you are receiving a printed copy, let us know if you would prefer the on-line e-version (in colour, less expensive to produce!).

## Non-cooperation, truth, and nonviolence

by Zain Haq

*Zain Haq started acting on the climate crisis when he was 12, after the 2013 Afghanistan-Pakistan floods, when he worked to raise funds for those in need. In 2019 he came to Canada to study at SFU and soon became very involved in various efforts, including a campaign to get SFU to divest from fossil fuels and the Save Old Growth campaign to protect what's left of majestic beings who have been alive since before colonization. In 2025 Zain was deported, on grounds many see as contrary to Canadian law, and certainly contrary to humanitarian norms. Zain still has strong ties to Canada; his wife is Canadian Sophie Papp. His commitment to nonviolence prompted our request for a short piece for our newsletter, and here it is. Thank you, Zain! Canada, and the world as a whole, we need you.*

In a letter exchange between Gandhi and Tolstoy, here's an excerpt from what Tolstoy had to say to Gandhi, and it had a significant impact on him.

"What does it mean that thirty thousand men, not athletes but rather weak and ordinary people, have subdued two hundred million vigorous, clever, capable, and freedom-loving people? ... If the people of India are enslaved by violence it is only because they themselves live and have lived by violence, and do not recognize the **eternal law of love** inherent in humanity ... As soon as men live entirely in accord with the law of love natural to their hearts and now revealed to them, which excludes all resistance by violence, and therefore hold aloof from all participation in violence—as soon as this

happens, not only will hundreds be unable to enslave millions, but not even millions will be able to enslave a single individual." - **Leo Tolstoy** (Letter to a Hindu/Letter to Gandhi)

A simple matter of fact, for example, is that the Nazis would not have been able to dominate Europe had countries refused to cooperate with him. Non-cooperation, truth, and nonviolence are meant to be balanced against each other.

If we are nonviolent but grounded in untruths, we are falling behind.

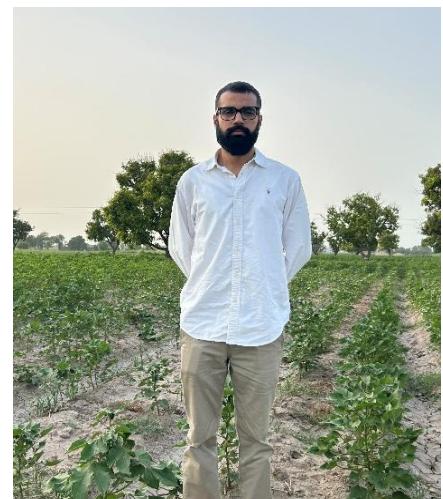
If we are grounded in truth, but violent in its pursuit, we are falling behind.

If we are both nonviolent and truthful, but still cooperate with evil, we are falling behind.

What all of this means is that we have to form an equilibrium between spirituality, for the lack of a better word, and action! — combined with a mind trained in reasoning to arrive at the truth. This combination is rare and seldom encouraged.

When we find the potential of all of these qualities existing within us, we must cultivate it, and when we find it in others, we must elevate them into a position of leadership, for without leadership, nothing can happen — contrary to hypocritical dogmas in activist spaces.

All of this requires us to be non-partisan, unwedded to any political party or explicit political affiliation. We are not meant to operate in the dimension of politics, instead we are meant to influence the entire consensus that dictates the totality of politics in any given country. We are meant to, through action, truth seeking (reasoning), and nonviolence, change the foundational values by which society operates and politics is influenced. Much like what Gandhi would go on to do after his exchanges with Tolstoy.



Zain on a tour to report on the situation of farmers impacted by climate change in Punjab Pakistan

## Join Conscience Canada

Membership open to anyone supporting CC's objectives.  
*No membership fee (donations welcome!)*

Visit: [consciencecanada.ca/membership/](https://consciencecanada.ca/membership/)

Let us know if you can help out as a volunteer.  
We need website and social media contributors.  
New thinking & viewpoints are always welcome.

Email : [info@consciencecanada.ca](mailto:info@consciencecanada.ca)



## CC BOARD

Renée Nunan-Rappard,  
Jan Slakov,  
Terri Sleeva,  
Charles Small,  
Linda Thyer

**The Peace Tax Return for the 2025 tax year  
is now available online for electronic completion through [CC's website](#).  
Fill out the form. Affirm your declaration of conscience. Divert military taxes.**

# CONSCIENCE CANADA 2026 Annual General Meeting

Saturday April 18, 2026, 3:00 p.m., EDT – virtual meeting via ZOOM conferencing

## Agenda

### 1. **Business section:**

Approval of minutes of the 2025 AGM (available upon request); Confirmation of board members standing for re-election; appeal for and election of new board members; Presentation and approval of 2025 financial statements (available upon request).

### 2. **Review of activities in 2025**

### 3. **Discussion of Nonviolent Defence:** Following a brief introduction to what is meant by “nonviolent defence” and information about the newly formed Canadian Coalition for Nonviolent Defence – Coalition canadienne pour la défense non-violente, the discussion will focus on these questions:

- 1) What do you see as the single most important benefit/value of NVD?
- 2) What are two unanswered questions to which you would like answers?

**NOTE:** This constitutes the official annual meeting notice required by the Conscience Canada by-laws.

**To attend the AGM** please send an email to [info@consciencecanada.ca](mailto:info@consciencecanada.ca) . (You will receive an email reply with instructions for how to set up and register for the AGM Zoom meeting on April 18.)

### If you cannot personally attend this year's AGM —

please send your proxy (see form below) for your vote

either **BY POST** to: Conscience Canada, c/o Box 200, Van Anda, BC V0N 3K0

or **BY E-MAIL** to: [info@consciencecanada.ca](mailto:info@consciencecanada.ca) (please copy and complete form below)

### Proxy for Annual General Meeting April 18, 2026

I, (please print) \_\_\_\_\_, a member in good standing of Conscience Canada, do hereby appoint:

\_\_\_\_\_ (please print) as my proxyholder for the 2026 AGM of Conscience Canada.

*NOTE: Your proxyholder is not required to be a member of Conscience Canada.*

**OR**  I appoint the current Chair of the Board of Conscience Canada (Jan Slakov) as my proxyholder

This person identified above is to act on my behalf as my proxy and is to vote:

as they see fit on all matters identified in the Notice of Meeting and on any amendments to these matters or on any new matters arising

**OR**

only in accordance with the following specific voting directions on matters identified in the AGM agenda:

\_\_\_\_\_

**This proxy has been completed and confirmed by me on:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**signature** (for proxy sent by post, signature not required if sent by email)