



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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Conscience Canada cultivates a Refuge for Building Better

by Jan Slakov

There's no doubt about it - Donald Trump embodies so many things peace activists object to. Of course, he's not alone in this; indeed, human history is full of examples of greed, sabotaging human decency and law, and consuming in ways that threaten life elsewhere and in the future.

Basir Bitra, who came to Canada with his family as refugees from Afghanistan, wrote about seeing Trump as a mirror, as a teacher, in his article of Nov. 1, 2025, [posted on Substack](#).

Despair at what is being unleashed by Trump and others involved in "end times fascism" can be offset by an awareness of all the resistance and also the health, beauty and life that persist, seemingly miraculously, in spite of it all. Not just an awareness, but the opportunity to participate in embodying what we want.

To this end, the CC board decided to host conversations by zoom periodically. These will offer us a chance to learn together, to be inspired and to create a space that can be a refuge for building something better.

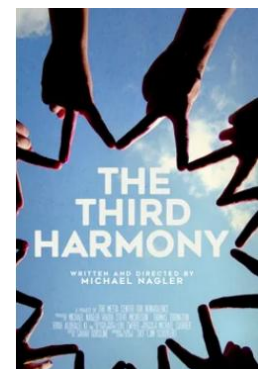
We're planning a sharing circle via zoom, on Oct. 4, starting at 4 pm PDT (Pacific), 7 pm EDT (Eastern). Since much of the work we're engaged in involves responding to suffering in the world, we'll begin by focusing on what is in our hearts these days. This can lead to an exploration of "what nonviolence asks of us, what does love require of us". To register, please send a message to info@consciencecanada.ca or janslavkov@proton.me to get the zoom link.

We're registering this with Campaign Nonviolence Action Days. Here are a few more events you may want to join, which are part of the Campaign:

- [Register for the Metta Center's showing](#) of its film, The Third Harmony, on September 21, the International Day of Peace.
- On Oct. 4 the Center for Nonviolent Communication is hosting via Zoom a 24-hour celebration of resonance & belonging — sharing about the meaning of NVC in our lives and our connection to the legacy of nonviolence. Details and register here: <https://www.cnvc.org/news/stories-of-living-peace>.

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- Find other online events to join (or maybe one in your community) via the [Campaign Nonviolence actions list](#)

While Conscience Canada members continue with the white poppy campaign*, we are also branching out. The pamphlet included with this newsletter is one manifestation of that branching out, while the article by long time member Daphne Davey reminds us of the deep rootedness of CC and conscientious objection in general. This, I believe, is part of what allows for us to extend our branches outwards, to flourish, in these times.

* Note: Please contact us at info@consciencecanada.ca or janslakov@proton.me or b.nota@icloud.com for sample poppies and/or white poppy campaign wallet cards.

Personal Witness in Tax Court

by Daphne Davey

When I was asked to contribute an article on my experience as a conscientious objector (CO) in 1992 when I appeared in the federal tax court in Charlottetown (for diverting the DND percentage of my taxes to the Peace Trust Fund), I didn't realize how deeply it would affect me when I read through the material that I have kept on this unique experience.

In that file was a copy of my five-page presentation to the court, and records of the preparative and follow-up actions I took, including contacting politicians and the media, and hosting an information evening that included showing the videos "Your money or your life: A dialogue on conscientious objection" and "Lest we forget Iraq."

Of course, as expected, my case was quashed. After all, Dr. Jerilyn Prior, a Quaker in BC, had previously lost her own case to the Supreme Court of Canada, despite being represented by Thomas Berger. For both of us, the "freedom of conscience and religion" enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was not perceived as a priority over the Income Tax Act, which made no accommodation for CO's.



Long time conscientious objector Daphne Davey

What I was not expecting in reading through all this material after so many years was a sense of, well, awe that I had the temerity to stand up in a court (and in front of the media) and deliver an impassioned speech that was prompted by my pacifist conviction as a Quaker. It seems the judge picked up on that message. He stated, my convictions were "demonstrably held deeply by [me]. The sense of commitment is real." The judge was satisfied that the "belief is genuine." Well, that was something, at least. He also did not pursue the issue when I politely advised the court that I would address the judge by his position and name, and not as "Your Honour." A seemingly trivial point, perhaps, but then in the early history of the Quakers it was a huge issue and contributed to their persecution.

One other impression stays strongly with me to this day. After I got home from the tax court, I remember standing in a room at home and feeling like a big rucksack of bricks had been lifted off my back. So that's what it felt like after acting according to your conscience!

To access Daphne's full [statement to the tax court click on this link](#).

Worth Repeating



"Rarely, if ever, is any of us healed in isolation. Healing is an act of communion."

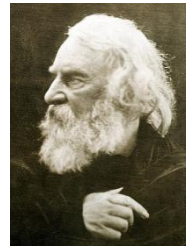
"Beloved community is formed not by the eradication of difference but by its affirmation, by each of us claiming the identities and cultural legacies that shape who we are and how we live in the world."

~ bell hooks

"A single twig breaks, but the bundle of twigs is strong." ~ Tecumseh

"If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility."

~ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow



Upcoming Events and Statements We Support

We signed on [to support the rights of migrants](#) to freedom of expression and assembly and we support the [Day of Action for Migrant Rights](#).

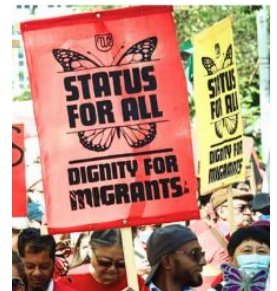
Also, the Independent Jewish Voices' call to defend the curatorial [independence of the Canadian Museum of Human Rights](#).

Also, the Well-being Economies Alliance [submission on the Federal Sustainable Development Strategy](#).

Also, a letter to show our support for the Canadian Peace Museum.

Also, the Open Letter to "Confront Carney's CEO Summit" aka the Invest in Canada Summit hosted by the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board. Associated counter-summit events include:

- **September 11:** Art build in Toronto for Carnival Against Capitalism, 33 Cecil St., 5:30-8:30pm. Make your signs, banners, masks and anti-capitalist / anti-CEO art here.
- **September 12-13:** [The Many versus The Money](#) counter summit at OCAD in Toronto
- **September 13:** [Capitalism Can't Be Fixed counter-summit panel](#) in Toronto at 720 Spadina Ave 6-9pm
- **September 14:** [Confront Carney's CEO Summit rally](#) and Carnival Against Capitalism contingent, 6pm sharp, Nathan Phillips Square in Toronto



Also, the Open Letter to Prime Minister Carney and Minister of Women and Gender Equality Rechie Valdez to Cut Military Spending and Invest in a Green, Peace Care Economy. The letter will be presented on Sept. 21 in Ottawa as part of the Peace One Day campaign. [Click on this link to personally sign on to the letter.](#)

Also, Seniors Climate Witness will be in Ottawa at that time, from Sept. 19 - 24. Plans include:

Sept. 19 — [Climate march](#), 9:30 am; Community Dinner (TBC)

Sept. 20 — [Nonviolent Action Training](#), Friends House, 91 Fourth Avenue, 2-5 pm;
[Screening of Earth's Greatest Enemy](#), 6 pm

Sept. 21 — [1,000 Women for Peace](#) rally at 4pm; contact tlorincz@dal.ca for details.

Sept. 22 — **Seniors' Climate Witness nonviolent action (time and location TBA)**

Sept. 23 — Public witness activities

Sept. 24 — Closing gathering

Also, World Beyond War conference [#NoWar2026 Beyond Borders](#) via Zoom - **Oct. 23 – 25**



Gratitude

~ by Jan Slakov

As I put this newsletter together, I want to stop to share thanks. There's World Beyond War, which offers courses and conferences, through which we keep connecting with good people. One of these is H       Montpetit who offered to help CC with communications. Her work inspired us to produce the pamphlet we're sharing with this newsletter.

Todd Lumley has kept our website going for many years now; periodically essential functions simply stop working and somehow Todd always figures out how to get things back on the rails.

And our donors! Thank you very much. Your generosity is matched by the generosity of people like Todd, who offer their services to us free of charge.

If you're getting this newsletter by mail, it's our former president, Mary, who gets it printed and mails it out. She and Bruna and Doug, all past presidents, continue to help in many ways; thank you!

When Basir invites us to take time to look inwards, asking what is in our hearts, it's a reminder that in this work for peace and justice, we do not look away, we maintain awareness of suffering and that can take its toll. So, I'm grateful to all of us who make room in our lives for that awareness, and who persist in finding ways to act in genuine solidarity.

ABOUT

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

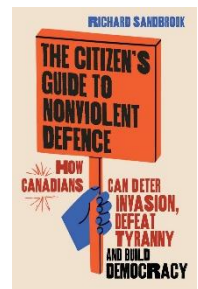
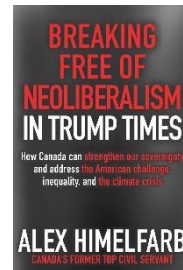
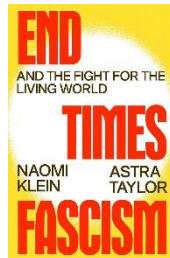
The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions of Conscience Canada. This newsletter is available on-line at www.consciencecanada.ca. If you are receiving a printed copy, let us know if you would prefer the on-line e-version (in colour, less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

Books

Douglas & McIntyre asked Richard Sanders to write *The Citizens' Guide to Nonviolent Defence: How Canadians Can Deter Invasion, Defeat Tyranny and Build Democracy*, available Nov. 3, 2026.

Meanwhile, other important books on related issues are also coming out this fall, for example:

- Alex Himelfarb's *Breaking Free of Neoliberalism in Trump Times, Reclaiming Canadian Sovereignty in a Ruptured World*, edited by Bob Rae
- *End Times Fascism: and the Fight for the Living World* by Naomi Klein & Astra Taylor.



How fortunate we are to have access to these authors and their work! Bruna Nota, Jan Slakov and Anna Stewart are keen to help ensure these resources are available to inform grassroots activism for a better world, so we're working on a review, perhaps a series of reviews.

Opportunities to use our latest pamphlet Alternatives to Militarism

~ by Jan Slakov

I wonder if others feel a bit perplexed, as I do. [A recent Lancet article](#) shares news that in both the US and the UK, there is majority support (72% & 82% respectively) for eco-socialist transformation. Surely percentages would be similar in Canada. Yet the current Liberal government just got three more MPs thanks to end-of-August by-elections.

As you likely know, the Carney government is not exactly eco-socialist! It's set to squander yet more tax dollars on fossil fuel infrastructure and there are even signs of autocracy. Journalist Althia Raj has written about how "[Mark Carney's Building Canada Act is a threat to the rule of law](#)"* and Carney picked candidates in at least two of the ridings where byelections were held, bypassing local candidate selection processes. This same government, our government, is jacking up military spending while cutting social programs. Arguably, this serves mainly to exacerbate many of the threats to our collective wellbeing and ultimately, our security.

Part of the reason for this disconnect between what people want, and what our government actually supports is, I'm sure, a lack of awareness of what's possible and what staying the course on our terrible trajectory really entails. We hope this new pamphlet (see next pages 7&8) can open the door to deeper awareness.

You might want to set up a table so passersby can pick up copies, and maybe "vote" in a looney poll where people deposit looneys into containers labeled "social programs such as health or education", "climate action such as people/active transportation friendly cities, re-wilding and regenerative agriculture" "nonviolent peace-building, including diplomacy" or "militarism", depending on where they'd like their taxes to go.

You could share them with members of community groups you're involved in, in honour of Campaign Nonviolence Action Days or simply mail copies to friends and family.

Don't forget to register any actions you may organize on the [Campaign Nonviolence Action Days website](#).

On the next two pages you will see our newest pamphlet that sets out our Alternatives to Militarism message. A print ready file is available on the CC website. Just click on this [link to access the downloadable/printable file](#)

The pamphlet is designed to be two-sided and accordion-folded into three panels. Have a look at our newest handout!

Join Conscience Canada

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

Visit: 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



CC BOARD

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Conscience Canada

Work for peace. Stop paying for war!
Travaillons pour la paix. Cessons de payer pour la guerre !

Conscience Canada works to redirect resources from militarism toward the things that actually keep us safe: health, housing, climate resilience, and respect for international law.

GET INVOLVED

Take action

Talk with people. Write your MP. Share this pamphlet. Bring one question to your school, workplace or community.

Connect

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This pamphlet was created by members and supporters of Conscience Canada. Special thanks to Basir Bitra, who was a member of a nonviolence youth group in Afghanistan and is still working with others from that group to create an institute of nonviolence. To learn more, check out basirbita.substack.com.

Full sourced version of this leaflet, with links to figures cited here, is available at consciencecanada.ca.

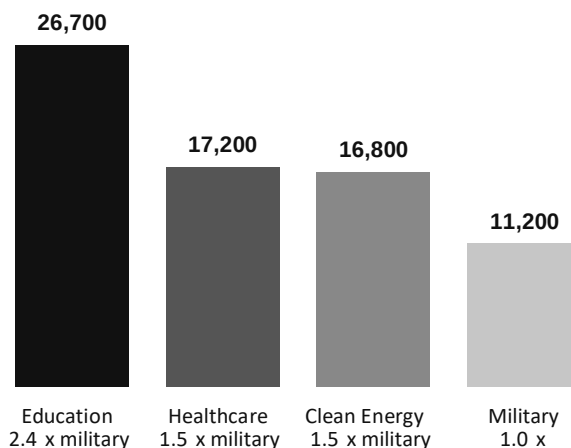
Work for peace. Stop paying for war!

THE QUESTION BEHIND THE NUMBERS

Military spending is often presented as the obvious route to safety. Yet we — our government too — know that no amount of military spending could fend off an invasion from a superpower.

Conscience Canada asks a wider question: can security also mean homes people can afford, healthcare, climate resilience, diplomacy, respect for international law, and communities skilled in nonviolence?

Where else could the money go?



Jobs created per \$1 billion invested
· Source: United Nations



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A PUBLIC CONVERSATION ABOUT SECURITY



Illustration: 7 Generations-The Impact of War, by Canadian painter Hélène Montpetit

WHAT IF REAL SECURITY CAN'T BE STOCKPILED?

Canada is spending dramatically more on the military. The question is not only how much we spend, but what kind of security we are building — and what we leave underfunded.

\$23B

DND EXPENDITURES, 2016

\$51B

DND BUDGET, 2026-27

+60%

SHARE OF FEDERAL GHG EMISSIONS
ATTRIBUTED TO THE MILITARY

WHAT KEEPS PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND THE LIVING WORLD SAFE?

Real security is shared wellbeing

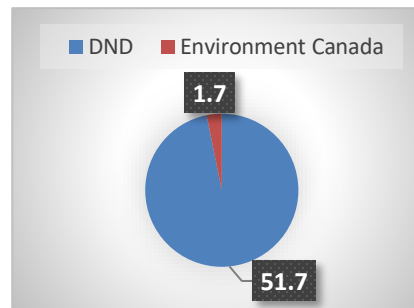
- A safe home and enough food.
- Healthcare and community services people can actually access.
- Climate-resilient infrastructure and clean air and water.
- Diplomacy, international law and nonviolent conflict transformation.
- The ability to disagree without dehumanizing one another.

ROBBING PETER TO PAY PAUL?

WHEN THE MILITARY BUDGET GROWS, WHAT GETS CUT?

- ① **CARE**
Federal funding for the Pharmacare program expires on April 1, 2029.
- ② **HOME**
Federal housing spending is projected to fall from \$9.8B (2025–26) to just \$4.3B by 2028–29.
- ③ **RELATIONSHIPS**
Over \$3B was cut from Indigenous Services this year, which raises questions about Canada's commitment to reparation and nation-building.
- ④ **LIVING WORLD**
Agricultural research, climate action and environmental protection receive far less attention than military expansion.

Here is a comparison of spending for 2026-27 on the military versus the environment (billions of \$)



Also affected: overseas development assistance — even as trade deals like the Canada-Ecuador FTA move ahead despite objections from land defenders and Parliament's own International Trade committee.

WHAT COULD WE BUILD INSTEAD?

Conscience Canada is not asking people to care less about safety. We are asking Canada to think more deeply about what safety requires.

- Honour Treaties and international law.
- Build practical skills for nonviolence in everyday life, communities and public policy.
- Invest in health, housing, food security, education and climate resilience.
- Protect life – human and beyond – rather than treating destruction as inevitable.
- Make room for critical thinking: ask who benefits, who pays, and what alternatives are being ignored.

“Another world is possible... on a quiet day I can hear her breathing.”

— Arundhati Roy



Peace Poppy by Canadian artist Lyla Smith