

OTTAWA DECLARATION

Canada and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

“Humanity remains one misunderstanding, one misstep, one miscalculation, one pushed button away from annihilation.”

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres issues this stark warning of the immediacy of the nuclear threat and the unacceptable catastrophic humanitarian consequences of firing any of the world’s 13,000 nuclear weapons. All nine states holding these weapons pursue the perpetual “modernization” of their arsenals – notably making a mockery of the disarmament commitments of the nuclear weapon powers party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), and threatening to extend the nuclear weapons era indefinitely. More than ever, the world needs to hear a clear moral and legal call for the elimination and perpetual prohibition of these instruments of mass destruction.

Just such a call has come with urgency and authority in the January 2021 entry into force of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). In unequivocal language, the TPNW declares that “any use of nuclear weapons would be abhorrent to the principles of humanity and the dictates of public conscience.”

This historic treaty exposes and stigmatizes nuclear weapons and their use as standing outside the norms of international humanitarian law. It challenges nuclear weapon states to finally act on their NPT disarmament commitments. The TPNW reinforces the urgent need for nuclear weapon states to undertake and conclude nuclear disarmament negotiations, with non-nuclear weapon states also at the table.

Therefore, we the undersigned urge Canada to join the Treaty and call on the Government to begin the process by publicly welcoming the Treaty’s moral authority and legal mandate in the pursuit of a world without nuclear weapons. We also urge Canada to join Norway and Germany as observers at the first Meeting of States Parties, and to work at bringing NATO into conformity with the Treaty and the NPT.

We thus call on Canada to challenge the nuclear retentionist policies of NATO, by, as a first step, acting decisively on the still relevant 2018 recommendation of the House of Commons Committee on National Defence – that, “on an urgent basis,” the Government of Canada “take a leadership role within NATO in beginning the work necessary for achieving the NATO goal of creating the conditions for a world free of nuclear weapons.”

The overwhelming majority of Canadians support the abolition of nuclear weapons and look to their government for energetic and sustained leadership in helping to push the world back from the abyss of nuclear annihilation. Nuclear disarmament diplomacy must become a national priority. Emergency action is required.

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This “Ottawa Declaration” emerged out of the conference of international experts initiated and convened by The Simons Foundation Canada and Canadians for a Nuclear Weapons Convention (CNWC) in Ottawa, November 29-30, 2021, on “Canada and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.” The declaration is endorsed by the following individuals (conference participants, indicated by an asterisk, and CNWC supporters, all of whom are recipients of the Order of Canada). Affiliations are included for identification purposes only and do not indicate institutional endorsement.

Ray Acheson*
Director, Reaching Critical Will of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom

Carolyn Acker C.M.
Founder, Pathways to Education Canada

The Hon. Lloyd Axworthy, C.C.*
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canada

Tom Axworthy, O.C.
Secretary General, InterAction Council; Chair, Public Policy, Massey College, University of Toronto

Christopher R. Barnes, C.M.
Professor Emeritus, Earth and Ocean Sciences, University of Victoria

Gerry Barr, C.M.
Former CEO of the Directors Guild of Canada; Former President and CEO of Canadian Council for International Cooperation

Adele Buckley*
Pugwash Council; Past Chair, Canadian Pugwash Group

Robin Collins*
Co-Chair, Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

Paul Copeland, C.M.
Criminal law, immigration law and national security law lawyer; Co-founder and life bencher of the Law Society of Ontario

Cathy Crowe, C.M.
Public Affiliate, Department of Politics and Public Administration, Ryerson University

Bonnie Docherty*
International Human Rights Clinic, Harvard Law School

Howard Dyck, C.M.
Artistic Director, Nota Bene Players & Singers; Former CBC Radio host of Choral Concert and Saturday Afternoon at the Opera

John English, O.C.
Distinguished University Professor Emeritus, University of Waterloo

Ivan Fellegi, O.C.
Chief Statistician of Canada Emeritus

Nigel Fisher O.C.
Former United Nations Assistant Secretary-General

Peter Herby*
Consultant on humanitarian-based disarmament, Switzerland; Former head of the Arms Unit, Legal Division, International Committee of the Red Cross

Nancy Hermiston, O.C.
Head, UBC Voice and Opera Divisions; UBC University Marshal

Erin Hunt*
Programme Manager, Mines Action Canada

Cesar Jaramillo*
Executive Director, Project Ploughshares; Chair, Canadian Pugwash Group

Bruce Kidd, O.C.
Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto

Daryl G. Kimball*
Executive Director, Arms Control Association

Bonnie Sherr Klein, O.C.
Documentary filmmaker and disability activist

Anita Kunz O.C.
Artist, writer, educator

Stephen Lewis, C.C.
Former Canadian Ambassador to the United Nations

Tamara Lorincz*
Ph.D. Candidate, Balsillie School of International Affairs, Wilfrid Laurier University

Margaret MacMillan, C.C.
Emeritus Professor of International History, University of Oxford

Peggy Mason*
President, Rideau Institute; Former Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament to the United Nations

David Matas, C.M.
Lawyer specializing in international human rights, immigration and refugee law

Elizabeth May, O.C.
Member of Parliament, Saanich-Gulf Islands;

Parliamentary Leader, Green Party of Canada

Paul Meyer*
School of International Studies, Simon Fraser University

Jock Murray O.C.
Professor Emeritus, Dalhousie University

John C. Polanyi, C.C.*
Nobel Laureate (Chemistry, 1986); University Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto

M.V. Ramana*
Simons Chair in Disarmament, Global and Human Security; Director of the Liu Institute for Global Issues, University of British Columbia

Tariq Rauf*
Former Head of Verification and Security Policy, International Atomic Energy Agency

Ernie Regehr O.C.*
Co-Founder and former Executive Director, Project Ploughshares; Senior Fellow, The Simons Foundation Canada

Catherine Robbin, O.C.
Associate Professor Emerita, York University; President, Art Song Foundation of Canada

Hon. Douglas Roche, O.C.*
Former Canadian Senator, Member of Parliament, and Ambassador for Disarmament

Clayton Ruby C.M.
Lawyer and activist specializing in constitutional and criminal law and civil rights

Peter H. Russell, O.C.
Professor Emeritus of Political Science, University of Toronto

Randy Rydell*
Former Senior Political Affairs Officer, United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs

Alicia Sanders-Zakre*
Policy and Research Coordinator, International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

Tom Sauer*
Professor in International Politics, University of Antwerp, Belgium

Jennifer Allen Simons C.M.*
Founder and President, The Simons Foundation Canada; Founding Partner, Global Zero

Gérard Snow, C.M.
Jurilinguiste, anciennement de l’Université de Moncton

Setuko Thurlow, C.M.
Hiroshima Atomic Bomb Survivor and Nobel Peace Prize Recipient on behalf of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, 2017

James Walker, C.M.
University of Waterloo

Jessica West*
Senior Researcher, Project Ploughshares

Salim Yusuf
Distinguished University Professor of Medicine, McMaster University; Past President, World Heart Federation

Canadians for a Nuclear Weapons Convention



Rassemblement canadien pour une convention sur les armes nucléaires

