



QUAKERS

Canadian Friends
Service Committee

August 20, 2021

Dear Party Leaders,

Greetings from Canadian Friends Service Committee, the national peace and social justice agency of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Canada. We hope this letter finds you well.

In this moment when election platforms are developed and shared, we wish to express to you our conviction that Canada needs to shift course when thinking about security.

Canada's 2017 defence policy *Strong, Secure, Engaged* announced an astonishing 73% increase in military spending.¹ We need you, our leaders, to imagine a new use for these vast resources. The situation is dire. The status quo cannot last. We are asking you to be brave.

In discussing why wars continue although they consistently fail to deliver increased security or stability, Professor Geoff Harris explains, "Many institutions and ways of doing things persist because of the wide-spread acceptance of TINA [there is no alternative]."² TINA is a catchy political slogan, but it's untrue. There are always alternatives.

The report released earlier this month by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change paints a stark picture about our beautiful world being in its last possible decade to avoid the most catastrophic impacts of the climate crisis.³

As wildfires and droughts cause incredible havoc, Canada does not need new expensive military hardware that will emit more carbon while continuing to lock us into a failed vision of security. Fighter jets and armed drones will not keep Canadians safe.

Security means climate security: we need to invest in an urgent shift to a peaceful and green economy.

Security means shared security: Canadians are more secure when we help our world to be more secure. We can do this through helping to address root causes of violence and investing in diplomacy and violence prevention.⁴

We must drop the outdated idea of "national security." We do not exist in a bubble. COVID-19, artificial intelligence, and the climate crisis have all shown us that the world is now intimately interconnected and emerging issues don't respect our national borders.

We call on you to commit to ending plans for Canada to procure new fighter jets, warships, and armed drones. Instead of spending many billions on this military hardware, invest in meeting Canada's Paris climate commitments.

We are particularly disquieted by the thought of Canada procuring armed drones as has been reported by many news outlets. A pillar of international law is distinguishing between enemy combatants and civilians. Yet we know that drone programs operated by Canada's allies such as the US have engaged in extrajudicial killings on a large scale and regularly failed to distinguish combatants from civilians. Potentially thousands of children, like 13-year-old Amer Ali al-Saqra Huraidan, have been killed in these "targeted" drone bombings.⁵

We do not want Canada to have new abilities to engage in what may constitute war crimes. We are appalled to imagine Canadians' tax dollars being put toward such a program of secretive assassinations. This appears to us as a continuance of the worst mistakes of the costly and failed "war on terror" which, as founding members of the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group, we have opposed since 2001.

Our fears in 2001 have sadly proven correct. Canada created a "national security" context that allowed the worst aspects of human nature—fear, prejudice, and violence—to flourish. This approach to security has not worked. It has not increased Canadians' security. For instance we are seeing today, now that the US is pulling out after two decades of military presence in Afghanistan (with Canada heavily involved for a decade at a cost of many lives and at least "\$1,500 dollars per Canadian household"⁶) just how much of a disaster this war was for Afghans and the Canadians deployed.

We call on you as federal leaders to advance peaceful and green alternatives instead of furthering failed policies of militarism that Canadians and our planet cannot afford.

In Friendship,



Lana Robinson
Clerk, Canadian Friends Service Committee

¹ Canadian Friends Service Committee, "Our Questions about Canada's Defence Budget," September 5, 2017, <https://quakerservice.ca/news/our-questions-about-canadas-defence-budget>

² Geoff Harris, *Achieving Security in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Institute for Security Studies, 2004), vii.

³ See <https://www.ipcc.ch>

⁴ For our ideas on how to do this see CFSC's 2019 book *Are We Done Fighting? Building Understanding in a World of Hate and Division*, especially pages 215-259.

⁵ Ryan Devereaux and Murtaza Hussain, "Daniel Hale Sentenced to 45 Months in Prison for Drone Leak," *The Intercept*, July 27, 2021, <https://theintercept.com/2021/07/27/daniel-hale-drone-leak-sentencing>; Shuaib Almosawa and Maryam Saleh, "A 13-Year-Old Boy and Other Yemeni Civilians Were Killed in U.S. Drone Strikes This Month," *The Intercept*, March 26, 2018, <https://theintercept.com/2018/03/26/yemen-drone-strike-civilians-war-on-terror>

⁶ Brent Patterson, "Looking Back at Canada's War in Afghanistan," *Peace Brigades International-Canada*, August 15, 2021, <https://pbicanada.org/2021/08/15/looking-back-war-afghanistan/>