

Why Canada Should Withdraw from NATO

By [Science for Peace](#)

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Region: [Canada](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

Hon. Lloyd Longfield MP

February 20, 2019

Dear Lloyd,

I am a longstanding member of Science for Peace, Canada's most renowned scientific community for peace research and advocacy over more than 30 years centered in the Department of Physics of the University of Toronto. Its co-founding president was George Ignatieff whose son later led the Liberal party of Canada. So the positions Science for Peace adopts are not marginal and very seriously thought through.

The attached brief position paper advocating withdrawal from NATO is the result of years of research, debate and vigorous membership discussion which represents the overwhelmingly supported position of Science for Peace. It rightly advises that Canada in NATO is now in repeated violation of United Nations Treaty and Declaration in military aggressions under international law, and the President's covering letter emphasizes the need "to oppose global trends towards militarizing the many urgent and devastating humanitarian situations". I urge you to communicate these issues to your constituency and colleagues in the knowledge that the position paper and letter have also been sent to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister.

NATO's increasingly warlike policies far beyond the North Atlantic regional alliance it was founded on, coupled with US-led demands for ever more needed public money to finance its non-defensive policies of nuclear and military domination across continents, are directly opposed to Canada's common life and public interest, especially with Canada and the world's environmental defence so threatened and underfunded at the same time.

This is a repressed turning-point issue of our age which the responsible federal government must come to grips with for its integrity as well as for Canada and humanity's future.

faithfully yours,

John McMurtry, Ph.D (University College London),

Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, Professor of Philosophy,

University Professor Emeritus, University of Guelph Ontario, Canada



Science for Peace

toward a just and sustainable world

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The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau

Prime Minister

House of Commons

Ottawa

Dear Prime Minister:

Re: Canada's Withdrawal from NATO

Science for Peace calls on the Government of Canada to withdraw from NATO and to cease from colluding with NATO's pretence of pursuing defensive goals. In addition, we urge the government to join in condemning NATO's violations of international peace and security.

Finally, we call on the Canadian government to sign the United Nations' treaty to ban nuclear weapons and to work towards dismantling NATO altogether. Canada can, and should, do more to oppose global trends towards militarizing the many urgent and devastating humanitarian situations.

I attach a brief position paper, prepared by Science for Peace, which explains the reasoning behind our proposals for a major foreign-policy shift by your government.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Sandbrook DPhil, FRSC

Acting President

c.c. The Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs; The Hon. Andrew Scheer, Leader of the Opposition



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Why Canada Should Withdraw from NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was formed (1949) under a Treaty renouncing “the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.” The Treaty calls for military action only in response to an attack upon a member. By reserving the liberty of deciding when military action is required, it usurps the authority the UN Charter supposedly confers on the Security Council to make such decisions. But NATO’s assault on world peace goes much farther. Plainly, its many military initiatives (as in former Yugoslavia in 1992 and 1999, and in Libya in 2011) and its military “exercises” threatening Russia on its very borders (up to the present) have violated NATO’s self-declared limitations. One might regard this as sufficient reason for a peace-seeking member nation to withdraw.

Almost from its beginning, NATO has committed a still more serious breach of the spirit and letter of international agreements: it systematically strives to impose its will by the threat of nuclear war. On the one hand, Science for Peace can not condone Canada’s adherence to an alliance which insists on its readiness to be the first to resort to nuclear arms (discussed, e.g., by the Arms Control Association); but on the other hand, even were NATO abruptly to accept the principle of No First Use, the use or threat of nuclear war even in retaliation incurs absolutely unacceptable danger to the survival of humanity and must be repudiated. The rationale of nuclear deterrence, far from shielding Canada or anyone under a “nuclear umbrella”, acts to multiply the ways a nuclear war may be triggered, and magnifies the destruction it threatens¹.

Despite the increasingly potent threats to human survival through nuclear war and climate change, the public is largely uninformed by media, the government, and to a great extent within academia. Knowing the historical context is essential. With regard to laws and implementation of regulations that need to truthfully provide human security:

“The malleable, indeterminate, and oft-ignored ‘rules’ of the [U.N.] Charter concerning use of force can plausibly be marshaled to support virtually any U.S. military action deemed in the national interest. Limited or ambiguous U.N. Security Council approval, where available, is easily stretched.”²

In 1996 the International Court of Justice declared that “the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular the principles of humanitarian law”³ and yet there is silence about these threats coming from President Trump or implicitly from NATO’s first-use policy.

Similarly indeterminate and lacking in meaningful constraints have been the agreements

around nuclear weapons. The U.N. Non-Proliferation Treaty has not resulted in sanctions or limit-setting in any of the states already possessing nuclear weapons and has not addressed former president Obama's \$1.1 trillion allocation for nuclear weapons proliferation. The public is uninformed about the significant escalation of danger since 1991: George W. Bush's withdrawal from the Anti Ballistic Defense Treaty with the consequent development of a missile defense system that effectually increases NATO's belief that after a first strike a missile defense system could stop a nuclear counter-attack and that a nuclear war is winnable.

Challenging the ambiguity and compromises of the U.N. Security Council in order to address the mounting threats of human extinction, non-NATO nations and civil society members joined together to implement a nuclear ban treaty. Canada, bowing to NATO pressure, did not even participate in the meetings leading up to the treaty. Canada is also bowing to NATO pressure to increase military spending.

Science for Peace calls on the Government of Canada not only to withdraw from NATO and to cease from colluding with NATO's pretence of pursuing defensive goals, but to join in condemning its violations of international peace and security. We call on the Canadian government to also sign the treaty to ban nuclear weapons and to work towards dismantling NATO altogether and to oppose the global trends towards militarizing the many urgent and devastating humanitarian situations.

Lastly, it is the responsibility of an informed public to engage politically and demand the deep changes required for human survival.

*

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Notes

¹Daniel Ellsberg. *The Doomsday Machine: Confessions of a Nuclear War Planner*. Bloomsbury. New York. 2017.

²P. 99-101. Michael Glennon. *National Security and Double Government*. Oxford University Press: Oxford 2015.

³P. 213. Mohammed Elbaradei. "Preventing Nuclear Catastrophe" in Richard Falk and David Krieger, *At the Nuclear Precipice: catastrophe or transformation?* Palgrave. New York. 2008.

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