

February 18, 1998

The Right Honourable Jean Chrétien, P.C., M.P.,  
Prime Minister of Canada,  
House of Commons,  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Chrétien,

We write in deep appreciation of your government's persistent and courageous leadership in the ongoing effort to rid the world of the scourge of anti-personnel landmines, and to challenge you to bring that same visionary dedication to bear upon efforts to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

Our church communities rejoiced with all Canadians, and especially with people in mine-affected countries, in that proud moment in Ottawa last December when Foreign Affairs Minister Lloyd Axworthy signed the landmines treaty on behalf of Canada and when you handed to the UN Secretary-General a copy of the legislation confirming Canada as the first country to ratify the treaty. It was truly a milestone event, showing the world what can be achieved when governments and citizen movements work together, and particularly, when leaders step forward to challenge and encourage others.

We are grateful for your personal commitment to the effort to ban landmines and for the key role played by Mr. Axworthy and many officials in the Department of Foreign Affairs. Our gratitude and congratulations to you and your colleagues also extend to the many thousands of Canadians, individuals and organizations, who provided energy and expertise to make this achievement possible.

Canadian church communities, responding to God's call to all people to be agents of love and healing in a world that still knows great pain, participated in the movement to ban landmines. As church leaders, we believe that obedience to that same call of God requires us now to raise our voices in urgent appeal to our own communities, to all Canadians, and to you and your government, to bring a new commitment to what we believe to be one of the most profound spiritual challenges of our era - the challenge to rid the world of the plans and the means to nuclear annihilation.

The willingness, indeed the intent, to launch a nuclear attack in certain circumstances bespeaks spiritual and moral bankruptcy. We believe it be an extraordinary affront to humanity for nuclear weapon states and their allies, including Canada, to persist in claiming that nuclear weapons are required for their security. Nuclear weapons do not, cannot, deliver security - they deliver only insecurity and peril through their promise to annihilate that which is most precious, life itself and the global ecosystem upon which all life depends. Nuclear weapons have no moral legitimacy, they lack military utility, and, in light of the recent judgement of the World Court,

their legality is in serious question. The spiritual, human and ecological holocaust of a nuclear attack can be prevented only by the abolition of nuclear weapons - it is our common duty to pursue that goal as an urgent priority.

The Canadian churches have long worked for the elimination of nuclear weapons. In 1982, we leaders wrote to, and met with, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau to affirm that "nuclear weapons in any form and in any number cannot ultimately be accepted as legitimate components of national armed forces." In 1988, we sent the same message to Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, stating that "nuclear weapons have no place in national defence policies."

Since then we have welcomed the substantial progress that has been made to end the nuclear arms race and reduce the size of the superpowers' nuclear arsenals. But these steps, important as they are, are not nearly enough. The end of the Cold War has created an unprecedented opportunity to start the process toward the final elimination of nuclear weapons - and the World Court has confirmed that it is a legal obligation.

We are therefore especially disturbed by the refusal of nuclear weapons states to even begin negotiations on the abolition of nuclear weapons and to set clear time frames and objectives - and we are profoundly disappointed that Canada has to date chosen to publicly accept that refusal. Indeed, nuclear weapon states continue to take steps to maintain and "improve" or "modernize" their nuclear arsenals for the indefinite future.

It is our sincere belief that Canada has much to contribute to the effort to make nuclear abolition a reality. In this regard, we are heartened by your pledge in *Securing Our Future Together* (the second "Red Book") that "a re-elected Liberal government will... work vigorously to eliminate nuclear and chemical weapons and anti-personnel mines from the planet." We are compelled to note, however, that Canada continues to support, and to seek the illusory protection of, nuclear weapons in a number of ways (see the [Appendix](#), pp.3-4). Canada's position as an advocate of nuclear disarmament in the UN General Assembly, the Conference on Disarmament, and other forums is compromised by this fact.

The time has come for Canada to take a strong, principled stand against the continued possession of nuclear weapons by any state, affirming abolition as the central goal of Canadian nuclear weapons policy and adding Canada's voice to the call to immediately begin negotiations on a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

In support of this goal, Canada should immediately take the following actions:

- Urge all states to **negotiate** by the year 2000 an agreement for the elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework;
- Urge all nuclear weapons states, as interim measures and as a sign of good faith in such negotiations, to **take all their nuclear forces off alert status** and to commit themselves to no-first-use of nuclear weapons;

- **Renounce any role for nuclear weapons** in Canadian defence policy, and call on other countries, including Russia and Canada's NATO allies, to do likewise;
- **Review the legality of all of Canada's nuclear-weapons-related activities** in the light of the International Court of Justice ruling of 8 July 1996, and move quickly upon the completion of this review to end all activities determined to be of questionable legality; and
- **Embrace publicly the conclusions of the Canberra Commission** report of 14 August 1996, including in particular its recommendations that the nuclear weapons states "commit themselves unequivocally to the elimination of nuclear weapons and agree to start work immediately on the practical steps and negotiations required for its achievement" and that the non-nuclear states support this commitment and join in cooperative international action to implement it.

As it approaches the dawn of a new millennium, Canada could offer no finer demonstration of its commitment to being a constructive and healing presence in the international community than to deploy some of its considerable diplomatic skill and political capital to ensure that the world enters the next millennium with a formal treaty commitment to rid the world of the scourge of nuclear weapons.

The Canadian churches which we represent are committed to continuing their work toward the abolition of nuclear weapons, in cooperation with other Canadian and international nuclear abolition efforts. In this spirit of co-operation and common cause, we respectfully request the opportunity to meet with you at the earliest possible date to explore ways in which Canadian churches can further support the government in taking bold new steps to make nuclear weapons abolition an urgent priority.

We look forward to your early response. Please know that you and your colleagues in the Government of Canada are supported by the prayers and good wishes of Canadians.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. M.L. Bailey  
Moderator  
Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) in Canada

The Rev. Dr. Kenneth W. Bellous  
Executive Minister  
Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec

John Congram  
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Bishop Telmor Sartison  
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The Right Rev. Seraphim  
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