



Justice, and Only Justice, Shall You Pursue

2019 FEDERAL ELECTION GUIDE

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For links to all resources mentioned in this guide, please visit:

www.councilofchurches.ca/social-justice/election-2019/.

All Scripture quotations in this document are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

WELCOME

“Justice, and only justice, shall you pursue” is the theme of the 2019 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. This ancient appeal from the scriptures urges us to be focused on the main things: justice, redemption, right relationships. Include the prisoners, the strangers, and the poor in your community; do not be distracted by empty, symbolic actions or hollow promises.

Federal elections provide an opportunity for people of faith to reconsider what their faith commitments have to do with Canadian public life. Faith can provide an enduring vision of hope, a penetrating perspective on justice for all, and deep convictions about community, care for others, a love for creation, solidarity, and service. We need the vision, perspective, and convictions of people of faith to move us beyond partisan promises and postures to genuine solidarity and service with people and the whole inhabited Earth, the *oikoumene*.

The Canadian Council of Churches offers this guide as a source of reflection for all who are participating in the 2019 federal election. The members of the Canadian Council of Churches have achieved consensus on the priority issues listed here. Each priority issue includes sample questions you can ask of candidates, then lists resources and links where you can learn more. We invite you to use this resource to:

- think through your own election priorities;
- call a group together to prepare for meetings with candidates;
- organize and participate in all-candidates meetings in your riding;
- go deeper into issues you care about and work on them with others; and
- ask questions of your representatives and candidates for office.

The good news of the gospel is not meant to be kept under a shade, hidden away. Neither is discerning what the good news means for our society meant to be a private affair. Join with your family and community to work out the issues you care deeply about. Then formulate the questions for candidates that mean the most so you can vote responsibly and faithfully.

May we together draw on the deep wells of our faith, vision, and convictions to pursue justice and peace for all before, during, and after this federal election.

In Christ’s abundant love,



The Rev. Stephen Kendall
President



Peter Noteboom
General Secretary

30 August 2019

REFUGEES

Today, one in every 113 people on Earth has been forced to leave their homes. War, persecution, community violence, and climate change have made it impossible for millions to remain in their communities, prompting them to seek safety and security far from home.

According to the UN High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), there are now over 65 million people forcibly displaced, and 25 million of these are now refugees. Half of those refugees are under the age of 18.

Whether in the Jubilee story in Leviticus, or Paul's letter to the Romans, the biblical call to extend hospitality to strangers is unmistakable. How will we advocate for extending that hospitality through Canadian refugee policies?

Questions for candidates

How will you and your party guarantee that all asylum seekers, refugee claimants, and refugees who arrive in Canada are treated fairly and protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms once they arrive in Canada?

How will you, and your party, work globally with others to address the causes of displacement abroad?

Resources

In May 2017 the Governing Board of The Canadian Council of Churches voted to challenge the US – Canada Safe Third Country Agreement under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Read more about the [Charter challenge on our website](#).

To learn more about the broader global context of migration and forced displacement, visit the resources available at [Project Ploughshares](#).

The Canadian Council of Churches has signed [the open letter](#) urging party leaders and all candidates for office in the upcoming federal election to engage in discussions about migration in ways that: recognize our shared humanity, reflect how Canada finds opportunity through diversity, show how refugees strengthen our communities and help build our economy, and honour Canada's legal obligations to respect and uphold the human rights of those fleeing persecution.

MATTHEW 25:35–36: *I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.*



PEACE AND DISARMAMENT

The so-called Doomsday Clock, a metaphor established by the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* to illustrate how close the world is to human-made global catastrophe, is currently set to two minutes before midnight. The rationale for eliminating nuclear weapons rests in the possibility that a catastrophe could occur, by accident or design, that would likely involve more powerful bombs than those used in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Until all nuclear weapons are eliminated, there remains an entirely preventable risk of disaster.

In recent years, renewed attention to the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons has been both a catalyst and rallying point for a growing number of states and international civil society organizations. The widespread and long-term devastation that even a limited nuclear-weapons exchange poses to ecosystems, the global economy, and human society could end human civilization and all life. Complete nuclear disarmament is the only certain way to avoid such a humanitarian catastrophe. Yet Canada has offered only lukewarm support to the new humanitarian campaign to ban nuclear weapons through the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

Questions for candidates

Will you and your party pursue a policy leading to the Government of Canada acceding to the international Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)?

How will you and your party work to ensure that Canada takes a lead in international diplomacy to ban and then eliminate nuclear weapons within the next decade?

Resources

In 2019 The Canadian Council of Churches and the leaders of member churches [wrote to the Prime Minister and the leaders of all political parties](#) to reaffirm our longstanding call to eliminate nuclear weapons around the world and call on the Government of Canada to end its opposition to the UN's Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

In 2018 The Canadian Council of Churches adopted [Principles of Peace](#). These *Principles* articulate the shared witness and testimony of The Canadian Council of Churches. Peace is central to the mission and identity of all member churches and the heart of ecumenism.

Project Ploughshares, the peace research institute of The Canadian Council of Churches, has long been a leading advocate in Canada and around the globe for nuclear disarmament. For more resources, [click here](#).

ISAIAH 2:4: *He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.*



CLIMATE

The concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has exceeded 400 parts per million, well above the 350 parts per million threshold deemed to be the “safe” level for ensuring that runaway climate change does not imperil life on Earth. Globally, 2016 was the warmest year on record and the last five years are on track to be the warmest ever.

While Canada has signed the Paris Accord, the Government of Canada does not yet appear to have a plan in place to meet and surpass those emissions targets.

As Christians, we have a responsibility to care for our neighbours (Matthew 25) and to be diligent caretakers of this beautiful planet with which God has blessed us (Genesis 1:26–28). This includes being aware of how climate change adversely affects all God’s creation including people living around the world.

Questions for candidates

How will you work to ensure Canadian public policy leads us to meet and surpass the Paris Accord emissions targets and do our part to keep global warming below a 1.5 degree rise in global average temperatures?

What is your and your party’s plan to establish more stringent and ambitious emission targets?

What will you and your party do to put a price on carbon emissions, develop and promote a national renewable energy policy, end fossil fuel subsidies, and encourage the creation of an increasing number of high-quality, sustainable jobs in the renewable energy sector?

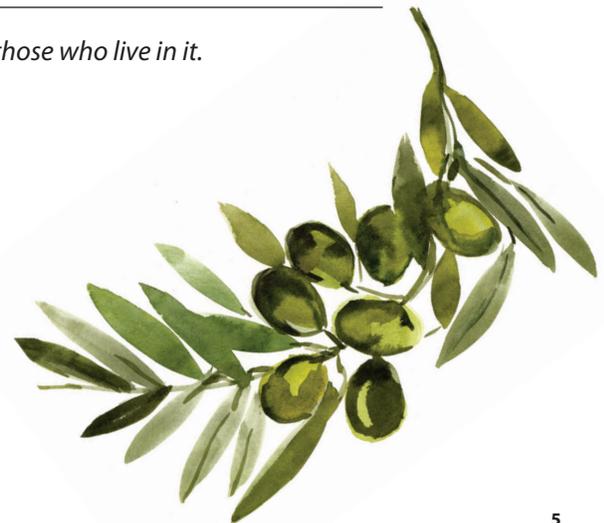
Resources

For Easter and Earth Day 2019, church leaders recorded [a video](#) for the love of all creation, for the love of the Creator.

In 2015 The Canadian Council of Churches, church leaders, and other faith leaders drafted and signed *On Promoting Climate Justice and Ending Poverty in Canada | Faith Communities in Canada Speak Out*. The content is still relevant today: See [climate justice statement](#).

The Arctic perspective on climate is crucial for Canada and for Canadians. For a view from the North, see the 2015 [Storforsen appeal](#).

PSALM 24:1: *The earth is the LORD’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.*



RECONCILIATION

In 1987 many of Canada's Christian churches called for the recognition and guarantee of the right of Indigenous peoples to self determination and to be consulted on resource development projects on their territories. They reaffirmed their commitments in 2007 with [A New Covenant-Towards the Constitutional Recognition and Protection of Aboriginal Self-Government in Canada](#).

In 2015 the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Indian Residential Schools concluded by issuing 94 Calls to Action and lifting up the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) as a framework for reconciliation.

In 2019, legislation that would require the Government of Canada to take all measures necessary to ensure that the laws of Canada are in harmony with the UNDRIP passed the House of Commons but did not pass the Senate.

Questions for candidates

How will you and your party work towards requiring the Government of Canada to take all measures necessary to ensure that the laws of Canada are in harmony with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation?

How will you and your party work to implement the 94 Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?

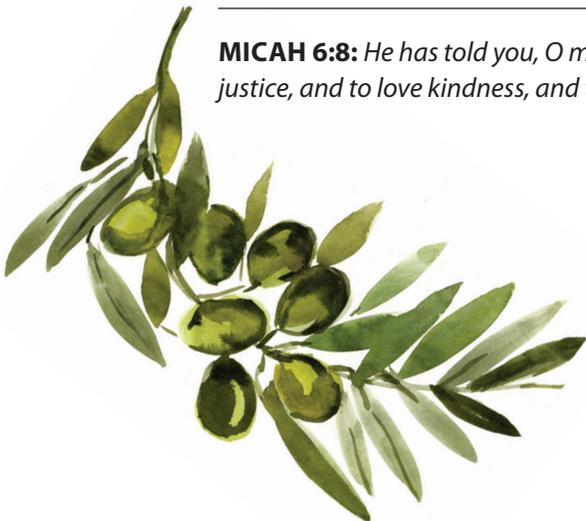
Resources

In 2019 the General Secretary of The Canadian Council of Churches [wrote to the Leader of the Official Opposition](#) asking what actions he will take to ensure that Bill C-262 passes the third and final reading in the Senate.

In 2015 The Canadian Council of Churches, church leaders, and other faith leaders drafted and signed [On Promoting Climate Justice and Ending Poverty in Canada | Faith Communities in Canada Speak Out](#). The content is still relevant today.

In 2014 The Canadian Council of Churches and the leaders of member churches together offered an [Expression of Reconciliation](#) during the Edmonton National Event of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

MICAH 6:8: *He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*



POVERTY

Poverty, and the fear of poverty, affects many in Canada. One in seven Canadians are currently living in poverty. That means 4.8 million Canadians struggle to meet their most basic needs every day. Statistically, poverty rates are higher among Indigenous and elderly populations, as well as in single-parent families and with workers in precarious jobs. Many work hard to maintain their dignity in the face of scarcity, vulnerability, and fear.

Christians can love our neighbours by countering the scarcity, vulnerability, and fear with actions and public policies that transform those realities into abundance, resilience, and trust.

Questions for candidates

Canada now has a federal Poverty Reduction Strategy. What will you and your party do to advance and strengthen the current federal strategy and ensure it is effective?

How will you, and your party, support a national housing strategy? A national early childhood education and care strategy? Improved income supports for Canadians living in poverty?

How will you, and your party, address the growth of precarious employment and the widespread change in stable employment for Canadians?

Resources

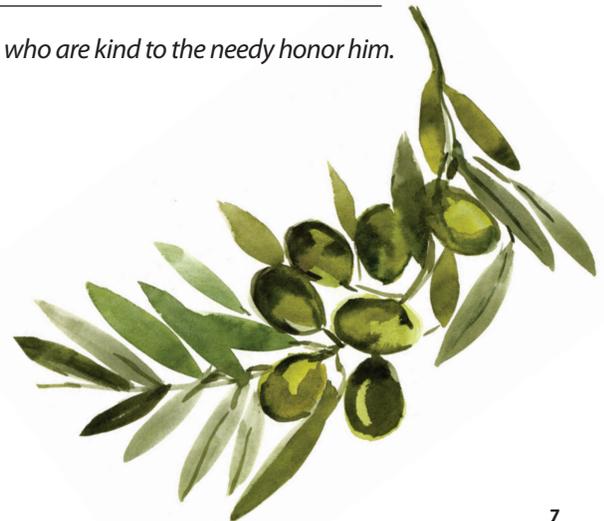
In 2019 The Commission on Justice and Peace of The Canadian Council of Churches released [Healing Poverty](#). This reflection and suggested actions is offered for communities of faith to engage in dialogue and action for a faithful response to overcoming poverty in Canada.

In 2015 The Canadian Council of Churches, church leaders, and other faith leaders drafted and signed [On Promoting Climate Justice and Ending Poverty in Canada | Faith Communities in Canada Speak Out](#).

In 2013 The Canadian Council of Churches and all its member church leaders [wrote to the Prime Minister](#) about ending poverty in Canada.

In 2009 The Canadian Council of Churches was among the first to endorse the [Dignity for All](#) campaign for a poverty-free Canada.

PROVERBS 14:31: *Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but those who are kind to the needy honor him.*



PALLIATIVE CARE

As Christians in Canada, we support just access for all to dignified, quality palliative care.

Serious inequities exist in access to specialized palliative care. For example, there are differences between urban and rural settings, there are variations in care standards between provinces and there are ongoing challenges to providing health care for more remote Indigenous communities.

Christians in Canada view providing dignified, quality palliative care as an intrinsic human responsibility toward the suffering person and his or her family. Palliative care places the priority on the worth and dignity of the whole person and their biological, emotional, physical, environmental, social, and spiritual needs, wherever they may be in Canada.

According to the World Health Organization, palliative care: *improves* the quality of life of patients and their families; *includes* early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other physical, psychosocial, and spiritual problems; *provides* relief from pain and other distressing symptoms; *affirms* life and regards dying as a normal process; *intends* neither to hasten nor postpone death; *integrates* the psychological and spiritual aspects of patient care; *offers* a support system to help patients live as actively as possible until death; *provides* a support system to help the family cope during the patient's illness and in their own bereavement; *uses* a team-based approach to address the needs of patients and their families, including bereavement counselling, if indicated; *enhances* the quality of life, and may also positively influence the course of illness; and is applicable early in the course of illness in conjunction with other therapies that are intended to prolong life.

Questions for candidates

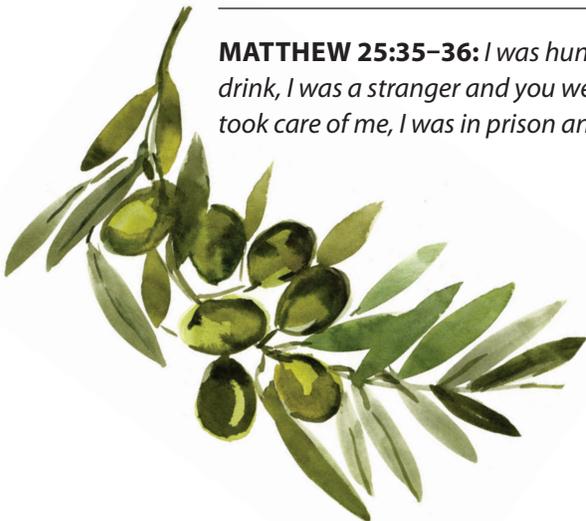
What specific steps will you and your party take to support just access for all to dignified, quality palliative care?

What is your and your party's position with respect to ensuring universal access to palliative care, as defined by the World Health Organization, in Canada?

Resources

In 2016 the Commission on Faith and Witness of The Canadian Council of Churches issued a [Statement of Support for Universal Access to Palliative Care in Canada](#).

MATTHEW 25:35–36: *I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.*



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

On June 16, 2019, the Quebec National Assembly passed Bill 21, legislation that formally bans public servants from wearing religious symbols in the course of their work. In practice, this means that teachers, police officers, judges and many others are prevented from wearing hijabs, turbans, kippas, and crucifixes. For some, these symbols are an affirmation of faith, while for others they are closely linked with religious practice and observance. The Canadian Human Rights Commission has expressed its deep concern that the Bill violates the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of religion. The Chief Commissioner, Marie-Claude Landry, said: "The law seeks to target people for their religious beliefs. It would create barriers, would limit people's opportunities and their ability to fully participate in society."

In its 2016 Statement on Religious Freedom, The Canadian Council of Churches affirmed that "In the Canadian context, to be secular means to remain pluralistic. Secularism includes freedom of belief, both in one's private and public life. Thus there should be no official religion in this country, but neither should there be any form of official atheism."

Questions for candidates

How will you and your party work to respect and protect the fundamental right to freedom of expression and freedom of religion across Canada?

How will you and your party promote the freedom of belief in both private and public life?

How will you and your party take action against intolerance and expressions of hate?

Resources

In 2016, responding to the Charter of Values debate in Quebec, the Governing Board of The Canadian Council of Churches adopted a [Statement on Religious Freedom](#).

CORINTHIANS 13:8: Love never ends.



SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Both labour and sex trafficking are harmful realities for people in communities across Canada.

For decades, trafficking for sexual purposes has been a widespread and devastating reality for many women in Canada. In recent years, although laws to prosecute and punish offenders have been strengthened, more could be done to prevent sexual exploitation and to protect the rights of children, women, and men who have been exploited.

In response to public calls for action on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada, an inquiry has been carried out. The *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* formally released its final report on June 3, 2019, which included the finding that Canada's treatment of cases has amounted to a genocide and issued 231 calls for justice.

Questions for candidates

How will you and your party strengthen the National Action Plan on Human Trafficking, including preventing sexual exploitation, prosecuting perpetrators, and protecting the rights of children, women, and men who have been exploited?

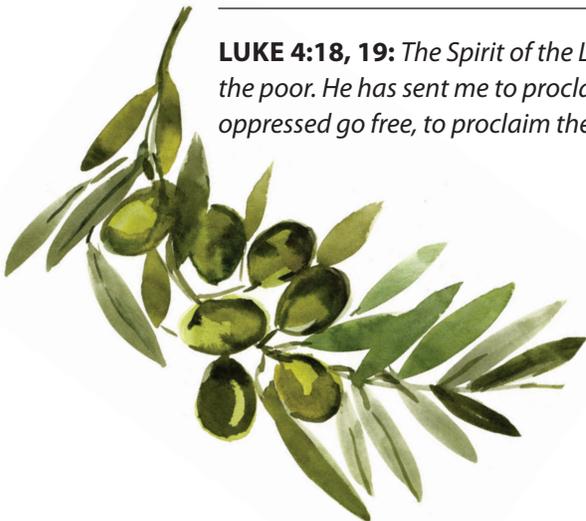
How will you and your party respond to the 231 calls for justice espoused by the *National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* as well as its finding that Canada's treatment of missing and murdered cases has amounted to a genocide?

Resources

In 2016, the Human Trafficking in Canada Working Group of The Canadian Council of Churches [wrote](#) to federal ministers and called their attention to the link between sexual exploitation and missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. It called for the causes and consequences of gendered, racialized, and sexualized violence to be examined and included in the *National Inquiry*.

In 2014, the Human Trafficking in Canada Working Group of The Canadian Council of Churches submitted a [brief](#) to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights regarding the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*.

LUKE 4:18, 19: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*



PUBLIC HEALTH CARE

Churches have been involved in the provision of health care services in Canada since the mid 17th century. The Augustines Hospitalières founded the Hôtel-Dieu de Québec in 1639. Many other religious groups comprised especially of religious women and Christian laypersons have been in the forefront of every effort against disease that this country has known.

Led by the Baptist Minister Tommy Douglas, churches played an important role in advocating for public health care for all through the adoption of the Medical Care Act in 1966.

Today many Canadians consider the Canadian public health care system to be an icon of Canadian identity.

Perhaps the biggest challenge facing the public health care system today is the opioid and fentanyl crisis. In the past three years, more than 10,000 people have died in Canada as a result of apparent opioid-related overdose.

Questions for candidates

How will you and your party work to preserve and expand the universal access, comprehensiveness, and portability of our public health care system across Canada?

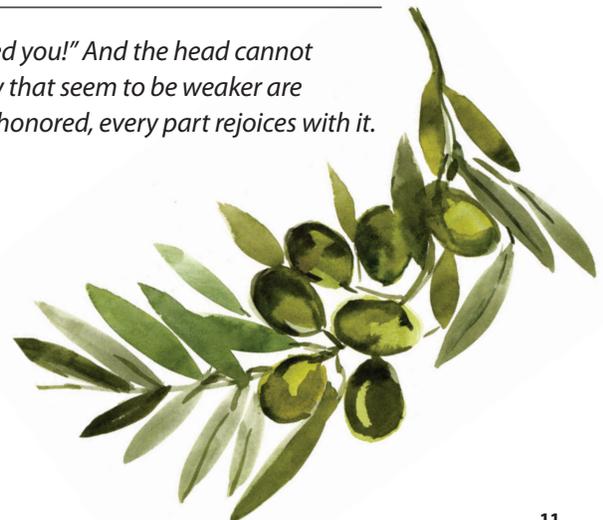
How will you and your party extend the benefits of the Canadian public health care system to those who remain on society's margins, especially those suffering from opioid addictions?

How will you and your party address the opioid crisis in Canada?

Resources

The Ecumenical Health Care Network of The Canadian Council of Churches contributed an ethical voice to the ongoing dialogue and debate about the future of health care in Canada. From 2001 to 2006, the Network engaged churches in ongoing support for the common good through education and advocacy—within the churches, in the broader community, and by engagement with government as appropriate. In 2014 some key resources [were republished](#).

I Corinthians 12:21–22; 26: *The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable... If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.*



WHO WE ARE

The mission of The Canadian Council of Churches is to respond to Christ's call for unity and peace, to seek Christ's truth with an affection for diversity, and to act in love through prayer, dialogue and witness to the gospel.

Nearly every place in Canada is home to Christian communities that belong to member denominations of the Canadian Council of Churches. So, The Canadian Council of Churches and its members are on the historic territory of the First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples of this land.

"As Christian communities we take seriously the challenge of reconciliation, to deepen bonds of friendship and solidarity, to strive to "walk together" in the present and future, and to consult with you about how we can take that journey together."

(Expression of Reconciliation addressed to survivors and former students of Residential Schools, our First Nations, Inuit and Métis brothers and sisters and their descendants, wherever they may be. March 2014)

The Canadian Council of Churches is a broad and inclusive ecumenical body, now representing 26 member churches including Anglican; Eastern and Roman Catholic; Evangelical; Free Church; Eastern and Oriental Orthodox; and Historic Protestant traditions.

Together these member churches comprise 85% of the Christians in Canada¹. The Canadian Council of Churches was founded in 1944 and marks its 75th anniversary this year.

Website: www.councilofchurches.ca | Facebook: www.facebook.com/CCC.CCE | Twitter: @CCC_CCE | Email: admin@councilofchurches.ca

Project Ploughshares is the peace research institute of The Canadian Council of Churches and works with churches, governments and civil society, in Canada and abroad, to advance policies and actions to prevent war and armed violence and build peace.

Website: www.ploughshares.ca | Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Project-Ploughshares/206928856016444 | Twitter: @ploughshares_ca

¹drawn from data provided by the Statistics Canada 2011 Survey.

The olive branch is traditionally regarded as a symbol of peace or an offer of reconciliation in allusion to the story of Noah in Genesis 8:1, where a dove returns with an olive branch after the Flood.

