

**Address to CPG/MPI Ottawa Policy Roundtable:  
“The NPT and Canada’s Nuclear Weapons Policies”  
February 26-27, 2004**

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Thank you very much for this opportunity. I have been asked to speak because I represent one of the NGOs in Canada which works actively on nuclear disarmament issues. We are a small but hardy band, taking opportunities to dialogue with government and raise awareness among the Canadian public where we can. It is not an easy task, and occasions for discussion like this Roundtable are welcomed and so I thank the MPI and the Canadian Pugwash Group and Senator Roche in particular.

At this time of the day and at the end of a long week of a lot of talking for some of us, I am cognizant of the fact that there might not be much left to say - or least nothing too original. I will be brief in my remarks touch on some of the points already made in the last day and a half.

The urgency associated with both the continued presence of thousands of nuclear weapons, the intransigence of nuclear weapons states, the vertical and horizontal proliferation among other issues has been clearly outlined by earlier speakers.

I would like to speak to the role of Canada and to the role of civil society particularly at this time going in to the 3<sup>rd</sup> NPT prepcom.

I would like to start with a few remarks about Canada at this juncture.

Canada has selected several issues to focus on for this upcoming prepcom and I believe it is on the right track in its efforts to support increased NGO access to the NPT, to lay the groundwork for enhanced reporting by all states parties with a view to creating a ‘culture of reporting’ and to develop thinking in the area of creating some institutional roots for the NPT which would serve to strengthen it and make it more responsive in a timely fashion to the real and changing world . These measures are practical applications of Canada’s commitment to the NPT of promoting ‘permanence with accountability’ and feel very Canadian.

Elements of these three initiatives are also mutually reinforcing as they serve to link the NPT more strongly to the outside world by working to open up the NPT more to civil society and therefore more scrutiny, by strengthening both the internal workings and outward looking face of the NPT through reporting and initial steps to build the capacity of the NPT as an institution.

Several of these ideas have NGO origins - particularly the States parties reporting initiative, part of Step 9 of the 13 Steps and have been further developed jointly with the government to a point where there now have a life of their own within the Canadian government and the ideas are in circulation with other governments as well.

There has been criticism of some these efforts as being tinkering around the edges or rearranging the deck chairs while the NPT ship goes down. I do think these are constructive efforts that can

make a contribution in the longer term and are in keeping with Canada's previous efforts. These are measured steps which the NGOs support but are they enough? I hope we can encourage Canada to examine other aspects of the 13 Steps and propose strategies for Canada to lead the way on some other ones as well.

Civil society also has an extremely important role going into the NPT. And the NGOs convened by Reaching Critical Will are well into the process of organizing the NGOs presentations.

This year I stand to learn more than I ever previously thought I wanted to know about the NPT because I will be one of the 2 NGOs reps on the Canadian delegation - an opportunity for which I am very grateful. And because I have signed the appropriate DFAIT form I will be on my best behaviour.

The stages in the development of public policy are several: issue identification, agenda setting, policy design, implementation, monitoring and impact assessment. Much of the activity of NGOs in the peace and disarmament community falls into issue identification and agenda setting – the other stages are hampered, at present, by limited staff, limited resources and a developing expertise in fuller understanding of policy process.

In the area of the abolition of nuclear abolition the issue and overall agenda with attendant tasks are clear.

- There are some 30,000 of them out there
- They are illegal, immoral
- Nuclear weapons represent the ultimate evil
- The USA is undertaking to produce new flexible useable nukes
- Closer to home - There are serious inconsistencies in Canadian policy with respect to NPT and NATO

It is the job of NGOs to keep the government focused on this big picture and to draw attention to inconsistencies in policy, to press for change. We are frequently frustrated by the slow slog of deliberate process which the government usually relies on and frequently ask how can / do we as NGOs help speed up the process.

The peace movement has what could be described as a common sense approach that can't wait for the slow cautious process that government normally adopts. Some of us have temperaments that are more suited to the slower pace of negotiation and change, but many don't and we need a balance of both which allows us to dialogue with government and take more activist positions. Oft times the challenge is to decide which is more appropriate when. Here I would add that most young people want action and are very cynical about dialogue achieving any results.

Society needs the alternative thinking and new ideas that NGOs can bring – in fact when we meet with DFAIT for NACD Consultations, as we did this week, we are asked for new approaches, to think outside the box, to tell them our views on their early thinking on a particular issue.

For the most part, NGOs are free of constraining policy and diplomatic subtleties and can, on occasion, cut to the chase of a problem with a clear vision for action - an approach which to civil society is obvious but raises alarm bells with officials and politicians. Our ideas are better received at some times than others...

In response to NGO policy work on peace and disarmament issues over the last decade we are told "No, we can't call for a ban on landmines as we would be made a laughing stock" - Well, we tried it and look what happened. "The US is our closest ally, we should support them in this invasion of Iraq" - Well, we didn't and I don't think anyone in Canada can now deny that we made the right decision.

The refrain we are currently hearing now on BMD is that we have to be at the table with the US for talks on BMD - we need to be there - an excuse I have heard a number of times this week from both government and elected officials. David Pratt in yesterday's Ottawa Citizen said: "we cannot protect Canadian interests if we are not at the table to discuss the defence of the continent." I would describe this as fear mongering. What exactly is it we are being protected from?

There is a serious difficulty with the lack of transparency in the government's decision-making process about our participation in missile defence. We are told that it may well go to the Standing Committees and it will go to Cabinet for a final decision. When will there be a public debate on this, and when can we get a clear picture of the what are the perceived costs and benefits to Canada and when and how will Canada decide that the system is indeed going to lead to weaponization of space and how will we get out. What is our exit strategy and how would it be triggered?

What will be the costs to Canada's credibility and political capital as a champion of disarmament when we are judged for preparing to enter into an agreement with the US on a system that could endanger the world with a nuclear arms race and detract from more constructive initiatives in the disarmament and diplomacy. With the prepcom in mind, how will we be perceived when we deliver our report on our compliance with the NPT, and possible / likely Canadian involvement in BMD is perceived as aligning ourselves even closer with a country that is developing new nuclear weapons for use including as a pre-emptive strike against unidentified threat.

I would like to say a few words about the International Policy Review.

Will the International Policy Review give us an opportunity to publicly discuss missile defence - to examine what is the agreement being developed between the US and Canada BEFORE it is signed, to ask and get answers to some pretty fundamental questions about missile defence?

For the IPR, we would ask that there be an examination of how well Canada is keeping to the principles of its nuclear weapons policy and what are the long range plans for resolving the contradiction in Canadian policy regarding its commitments under the NPT and its reliance on nuclear weapons for defence for the foreseeable future and to keep the peace, as part of NATO.

Specifically we ask that the IPR examine Canadian nuclear weapon policy how well have we worked to fulfill the commitments made when the government endorsed the recommendations of SCFAIT in 1999 which said :

That Canada work consistently to reduce the political legitimacy and value of nuclear weapons in order to contribute to the goal of their progressive reduction and eventual elimination.

**Government Response**

The Government endorses this recommendation. Canada's security is promoted through supporting an appropriate balance between Canada's nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation objectives and Canadian security requirements.

Or

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada intensify its efforts, in cooperation with States such as its NATO allies and the members of the New Agenda Coalition\*, to advance the process of nuclear disarmament.

**Response**

The Government agrees with the Committee's recommendation. NATO takes seriously its distinctive role in promoting a broader, more comprehensive and more verifiable international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. The importance and value of the Alliance as a forum and centre for coordinating practical work on future non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament should not be underestimated.

In closing I would like to quote John Loretz Program Director of IPPNW on his views for NGOs going into the next prepcom :

“Everything is going to come down to our ability to convey urgency and a global re-dedication to nuclear disarmament in the shortest possible timetable, and that in order to accomplish this we will have to rise above the absolutely necessary presentations of detail into a rhetorical space where information about what needs to be done and how to do it is offered as the easy part that only becomes so hard when the commitment to do it is lacking. We’ve got to give « these folks » a real injection of political will. They almost have to start thinking of the 2005 Review as a global act of civil disobedience against the US (and copycat) nuclear policy, and it is the NGO’s job to get them riled up enough to start thinking that way.”

Thank you.