



Canadian Voice of  
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Women's International  
League for Peace &  
Freedom (WILPF)  
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November 23, 2023

Hon. Steven Guilbeault, MP  
Minister of Environment  
Environment and Climate Change Canada  
200 Bd Sacré-Coeur, Gatineau, QC J8X 4C6

Catherine Stewart  
Canada's Climate Ambassador  
Environment and Climate Change Canada  
200 Bd Sacré-Coeur, Gatineau, QC J8X 4C6

**Re: Our feminist call for peace for climate justice and a request for a meeting in the new year**

Dear Minister Guilbeault and Ambassador Stewart,

On the eve of the 28<sup>th</sup> meeting of Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in the United Arab Emirates, we, the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace (VOW), and the Women's International League for Peace & Freedom Canada (WILPF), are jointly writing this open letter to you about our concerns about Canada's rising carbon emissions and military spending in the midst of catastrophic climate change. This summer, Canadians faced devastating forest fires and record-breaking heat, but were unprepared for these climate-induced disasters. This month, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development reported that Canada has failed to meet every climate target and is not on track to meet its Paris Agreement commitments. We are calling on you to take the transformational steps that we need to ensure a liveable planet and sustainable future for children and youth.

We are members of the Climate Action Network Canada (CAN-Rac) and support their policy proposals for a fossil fuel phase out and a just transition. We are opposed to the TransMountain and Coastal GasLink pipelines and stand with Indigenous peoples on the front lines protecting their land from oil and gas developments. We are also raising our objection to the Canadian government's refusal to

call for ceasefires in Ukraine and Gaza. We endorse CAN-Rac's statement calling for an immediate ceasefire, safeguarding human rights, and justice in Palestine and Israel. We cannot fight wars with other countries and cooperate on climate change. Peace is on the thematic program at the climate summit for the first time. We are urging the Government of Canada to articulate its vision and plan for peace in the context of climate change. We are advocating for gender-responsive climate action, demilitarization for decarbonization, cutting military spending for climate financing, cancelling the F-35 fighter jet program, and peace for climate justice that centres Indigenous peoples.

## **FEMINIST CLIMATE JUSTICE - GENDER RESPONSIVE CLIMATE ACTION**

As feminist peace organizations, VOW and WILPF support national and global efforts to advance feminist climate justice, gender responsive climate action and gender mainstreaming in all climate policies and programs. We also want to inform you that some of our members will be attending COP 28 in Dubai as part of official civil society organizations. We are affiliated with the Women Gender Constituency (WGC) of the United Nations Framework Convention Climate Change. WGC's research shows that the climate crisis is exacerbating poverty and gender inequality. Women and girls, especially Indigenous and people of colour in our country and the Global South, are at the greatest disadvantage and most vulnerable to climate impacts.

VOW and WILPF also support the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Women's & Girls' Demands for COP 28 that have been developed through the WGC. The demands are categorized into six priority areas for climate action in the region where the climate summit will take place. These demands, which have been developed collaboratively and endorsed by 180 feminists and organizations, include inclusive climate engagement and ambition, transformative climate finance, ending militarization and investing in peacebuilding to end armed conflict for climate action. The report can be found on the WGC web site: [https://womengenderclimate.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/WGC-MENADemands\\_COP28\\_EN.pdf](https://womengenderclimate.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/WGC-MENADemands_COP28_EN.pdf) (we have enclosed a copy).

It has been two years since the Canadian government submitted to the UNFCCC, Canada's *Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender and Its Gender Action Plan for Climate Policy*. However, we would like to point out that the federal government's increasing carbon-intensive military procurement and military spending are impeding the full implementation of the Gender Action Plan. The Gender Action Plan is also limited and requires updating. We are calling on you to consult widely with Canadian women's groups including ours on a new national gender action plan for climate change.

## **MILITARY EXPENDITURES DIVERT PUBLIC FUNDS AWAY FROM CLIMATE ACTION**

VOW and WILPF are gravely concerned that the federal government continues to spend disproportionately more on militarism than on climate action. The Department of National Defence

(DND) has the largest budget among all federal departments and agencies. According to the *Public Accounts of Canada 2023*, the annual budget for DND was \$31 billion, which accounts for 30% of all federal departmental spending. The federal government also announced \$38.6 billion for NORAD modernization and will be spending \$77 billion for the new fossil fuel-powered F-35 fighter jets and over \$306 billion for the fossil fuel-powered warships. Last year, the *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute* ranked Canada 14th highest in the world for military spending. By contrast, the budget for the Department of Environment and Climate Change was just over \$2 billion.

We remain troubled that Canada has failed to adequately invest in climate finance to help developing countries adapt to the climate crisis. We note that the federal government announced a climate finance commitment of \$5 billion over the next five years for countries in the Global South that is equivalent to the price tag for Canada's new fossil fuel-powered aerial refuellers for the military. We want the federal government to cancel new weapons systems, reduce military spending and re-allocate it to the climate emergency, a just transition and reconciliation with First Nations communities. At COP 28, we will be joining other civil society groups to call for cutting military budget for the Adaptation Fund, Green Climate Fund and Loss and Damage Fund.

### **MILITARY EMISSIONS ARE LARGEST SOURCE OF EMISSIONS IN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT**

VOW and WILPF also want to bring to your attention that among all federal departments and agencies, it is the military that has the biggest carbon *footprint*. DND including the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) consumes the most fossil fuel and is the largest emitter of GHGs. Carbon emissions from the military account for over 61% of all emissions by the federal government. Yet, military emission reductions are absent from Canada's latest Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) because of the National Safety and Security exemption. As well, they are ignored in the federal government's 2020 plan, *A Healthy Environment and a Healthy Economy*, and from the 2021 report, *Canada's Climate Actions for A Healthy Environment and A Healthy Economy*.

DND and the CAF require a steady flow of fossil fuel. DND's energy mix is comprised predominantly of aviation fuel, diesel fuel, natural gas, gasoline and heavy fuel oil to power their vehicles and operations. Yet, military vehicles like fighter jets, tanks and warships are notoriously energy inefficient, have long life cycles and have locked-in energy platforms that cannot be readily replaced by renewable energy. These vehicles are very harmful to the climate, the natural environment and to people. Burning fossil fuel for fighter jets to bomb other countries is unethical and antithetical to climate justice, so too is net-zero for national defence, which simply allows business-as-usual, carbon-intensive militarism. We cannot plant trees to offset the emissions of warplanes; we have to stop the wars. Thus, VOW and WILPF are calling on your government to cancel the procurement of new weapons systems and to support ceasefires and environmental peacebuilding.

## CANADA MUST DEMILITARIZE TO DECARBONIZE

As you know, the UN just released its latest *Emissions Gap* report. *Emissions Gap Report 2023* finds that the international community is falling far short of the Paris goals, with no credible pathway to 1.5°C in place. The report calls for a rapid transformation of society and states that “only an urgent system-wide transformation can avoid climate disaster.”

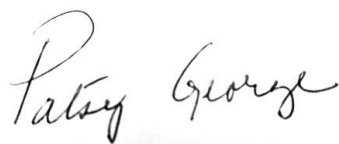
Thus, VOW and WILPF believe that it is irresponsible for the federal government to buy fossil fuel-powered weapons of war like fighter jets and warships that lock us into decades of carbon-intensive militarism and impede decarbonization. We are also opposed the militarization of the Arctic through NORAD. The federal government has announced \$38.6 billion for NORAD modernization. The government will build more environmentally-destructive military infrastructure in the north, like runways and hangars for the new fighter jets. Yet, the north is the fastest warming region of the country, is a fragile ecosystem and is the home of many Indigenous communities that are in need of greater social investment and are facing climate-induced natural disasters. This August, the city of Yellowknife had to be evacuated because of out-of-control forest fires. Canada does not have enough forest fire fighters and had to recruit fire fighters from other countries.

VOW and WILPF also want to bring to your attention that we oppose Canada hosting NATO’s Climate Change and Security Centre of Excellence. We do not support the “greening” of military installations or weapons systems or making war more “environmentally friendly.” We need a fundamental revision of national security to human security and demilitarize. We are calling for Canada to withdraw from NATO and NORAD. We need to cooperate with Russia, China and all countries on the climate emergency and other global challenges. The IPCC’s Sixth Assessment Synthesis Summary Report for Policy Makers concludes by stating “International cooperation is a critical enabler for achieving ambitious climate change mitigation, adaptation, and climate resilient development.”

Finally, we know that a climate-safe and sustainable future is only possible by ending war, stopping all fossil fuel developments and caring for the earth and each other. Please cut military spending to invest in climate financing. Please support peace for climate justice and a gender-responsive climate action that centres Indigenous reconciliation and the Global South solidarity.

We look forward to your reply. We would also welcome an opportunity to meet with you after the climate summit in the new year. We can also be reached at [info@vowpeace.org](mailto:info@vowpeace.org) or by phone: 416-603-7915.

Sincerely,



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**Co-chair Patsy George**

On behalf of co-chair Ellen Woodsworth and  
board the Women's International League for  
Peace & Freedom (WILPF) Canada



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**Co-chair Lyn Adamson**

On behalf of co-chair Hannah Hadikin and the  
board the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace  
(VOW)

cc.

Elizabeth May, co-leader, Green Party of Canada

Laurel Collins, shadow critic for Environment and Climate Change, New Democratic Party

Dr. Robert Kitchen, shadow critic for Environment and Climate Change, Conservative Party of  
Canada

Jacqui O'Neill, Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security

## **ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATIONS**

**Canadian Voice of Women for Peace (VOW)** is the largest national feminist peace organization with members and chapters across the country. VOW was established in 1960 and is a non-partisan, non-governmental organization comprised of a network of diverse women. VOW's main office is in Toronto. VOW runs many campaigns related to women, peace, disarmament and anti-militarism. VOW has consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and every year brings a delegation of Canadian women to the UN Commission on the Status of Women conference. For over 60 years, VOW has tirelessly advocated for a world without war. VOW stands for a feminist peace based on nonviolence, disarmament, diplomacy and common security with gender equality.

**Web site:** <http://vowpeace.org>

**Women's International League for Peace & Freedom (WILPF) Canada** is a membership-led organization committed to a feminist peace, social justice, and gender equality. We are a non-partisan, non-governmental organization members across the country. We are the national section of WILPF International, which is the world's longest standing women peace organization founded in 1915, with 32 Sections and 13 Groups across Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. Two of our leaders, Jane Addams and Emily Greene Balch, won the Nobel Peace Prize. WILPF International is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland and has a disarmament program called

*Reaching Critical Will* in New York. Our *Peace Women* program monitors the United Nations' Women, Peace & Security agenda and we have an international *Environment Working Group*.

**Web site:** [wilpfcanada.ca](http://wilpfcanada.ca)

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# WHERE'S THE \$100 BILLION FOR CLIMATE FINANCE?

## IT'S IN MILITARY SPENDING.

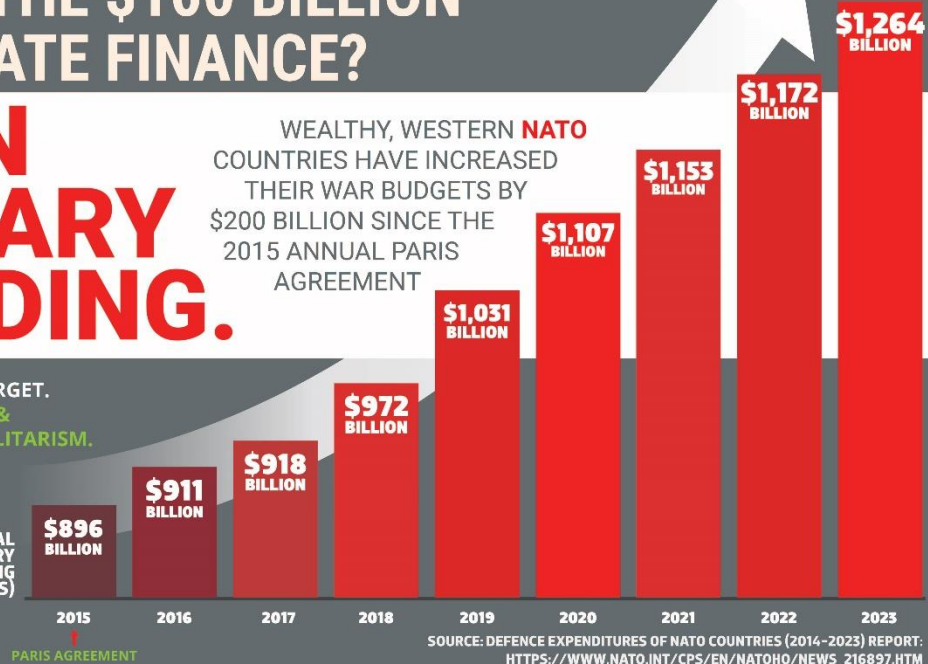
WEALTHY, WESTERN NATO COUNTRIES HAVE INCREASED THEIR WAR BUDGETS BY \$200 BILLION SINCE THE 2015 ANNUAL PARIS AGREEMENT

NO TO NATO'S 2% GDP TARGET.  
INVEST IN #BIODIVERSITY &  
#CLIMATEACTION NOT MILITARISM.



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TOTAL ANNUAL  
NATO MILITARY  
SPENDING  
(US DOLLARS)



SOURCE: DEFENCE EXPENDITURES OF NATO COUNTRIES (2014-2023) REPORT:  
[HTTPS://WWW.NATO.INT/CPS/EN/NATOHQ/NEWS\\_216897.HTM](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_216897.htm)