

Media Release

2 April 2007

For Immediate Release

Canadian Pugwash Group Urges MacKay to Repudiate NATO's Nuclear Weapon Policies

(Ottawa) A retired Canadian Forces general and a distinguished group of Canadian experts have raised objections to NATO's nuclear policies and urged the Canadian Government to advocate the alliance to get rid of its nuclear weapons by negotiating a step-by-step path to nuclear disarmament. This would relieve the world of the threat of a nuclear disaster.

"Despite the lack of a military threat, NATO still insists that nuclear weapons are needed for its security," said Major-General Leonard Johnson (ret.), the former Commandant of the National Defence College in Kingston. "Canada is still an associate nuclear power, and we want our government to lead the charge against nuclear weapons in NATO."

Along with General Johnson, members of the influential Canadian Pugwash Group are calling on Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay to raise the need step by step nuclear disarmament with his counterparts in all NATO countries. The Canadian Pugwash Group has urged him to act immediately so this issue can be discussed at the next high-level NATO meeting on April 26 and 27 in Oslo, Norway.

In a letter to Minister MacKay, the scientists' group pointed out that Canada is legally bound by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) which commits the 188 signing nations to a step-by-step process of nuclear disarmament. On the other hand, Canada also abides by NATO's Strategic Concept which declares nuclear weapons to be "essential." The letter argues that NATO "must reexamine the incoherence of...the NPT and NATO nuclear weapon policy."

"We are asking Minister MacKay to put a discussion of NATO's outdated and provocative nuclear weapons policies on NATO's agenda," said Dr. Adele Buckley, a physicist, aerospace engineer and environmental scientist who also serves as the Canadian Pugwash Group's chairperson.

The Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs was founded 50 years ago, at the height of the cold war, when Canadian industrialist Cyrus Eaton, inspired by the 1955 manifesto of Albert Einstein and Bertrand Russell, brought scientists from East and West together at his summer home in the village of Pugwash, Nova Scotia in 1957. In 1995, the Pugwash movement and its founder, Sir Joseph Rotblat, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their significant contributions toward the goal of nuclear disarmament.

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