

A MODEL

**CANADIAN CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY
FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT**

Prepared by Peace Quest Cape Breton
www.peacequestcapebreton.ca



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“We cannot afford passivity. We must take responsibility for our lives and our world, and be prepared to make our government listen and act. To do this, we must be informed. We must not shrink from the terrible and terrifying knowledge of what could happen and what is at stake. ... If we will not speak out for our children, and their children and their children’s children, if we will not speak out for the survival of our own land and our wider home Earth, in God’s name what will move us? May our hearts be touched, our minds opened, our voices raised.”

- Canadian novelist Margaret Laurence, Foreword to *Canada and the Nuclear Arms Race*, Edited by Ernie Regehr and Simon Rosenblum, James Lorimer & Company, 1983.

Foreword

This Model Canadian Citizens' Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament (CCAND) is issued as a follow-on to a Concept Paper published by Peace Quest Cape Breton on August 6 – Hiroshima Day – examining in detail both the strengths and weaknesses of such an initiative.¹ The Model reflects discussions with supporters and sceptics of the proposal, before and after the release of the Concept Paper, and we are grateful for all input and suggestions. *We wish to stress that the Model is intended and offered as a work-in-progress, and we welcome the opportunity to engage with others to further develop the proposal.* As we state in the Concept Paper –

Our main role, as a citizens' group, is not to design such an Assembly, but rather to advocate for one, in the reasonable expectation it would encompass all relevant expertise, perspectives, and prescriptions, spanning the gamut from reaffirmation to transformation of policy and posture. However, in the light of numerous requests – and in the hope that this Concept Paper will spur further debate and discussion – Peace Quest Cape Breton is planning to prepare one possible design for a CCAND, for release at our public launch in September.

Our Model proposes a simple, tripartite structure for the Assembly's deliberations, examining in turn:

- *the past* – Canada's remarkably complex, globally significant, and frequently dramatic nuclear history;
- *the present* – Canada's current nuclear-policy balancing act, at a moment of acutely heightened nuclear danger, as a loyal member of both a nuclear-armed alliance, NATO, and the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), committed to "good faith negotiations" on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World (NWFV); and
- *the future* – options for revising, renewing, or, alternatively, reaffirming and confirming, Canadian policy with regard to nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament.

Our expectation is that such a structure will foster a comprehensive set of discussions, from which no legitimate perspective or relevant voice is excluded, and upon which a thoroughly thoughtful series of recommendations can be based. And our hope is that such a process – and product – will have a major social and cultural impact, reviving long-languishing public and political interest in matters which should be of deep concern to us all.

Dr. Sean Howard
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¹ Peace Quest Cape Breton,
<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/62e917af1ce4685e86b4a7c7/t/62ed876be905230aa8030f5a/1659733956981/A+Canadian+Citizens%27+Assembly+on+Nuclear+Disarmament-+Concept+Paperhttps://static1.squarespace.com/static/62e917af1ce4685e86b4a7c7/t/62ed876be905230aa8030f5a/1659733956981/A+Canadian+Citizens%27+Assembly+on+Nuclear+Disarmament-+Concept+Paper>.

Model Canadian Citizens' Assembly for Nuclear Disarmament

Proposal and Mandate

Our proposal is for the Parliament of Canada to convene a 100-member Citizens' Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament, empowered to make recommendations on policy related to Canada's commitment to advancing progress towards a nuclear-weapon-free world. Parliament would not, of course, be obligated to accept all or any of the recommendations, but would be required to hold House and Senate Committee hearings on them, and place them before the House and Senate for full debate.

Selection of Participants

It is imperative that the citizens selected to participate in the Assembly accurately reflect the full socio-economic, regional, ethnic, cultural, and other diversity of Canada. This would be ensured by the tried-and-tested method of *sortition*, or civic lottery, to be entrusted by the convening authority to independent experts. Our recommendation would be to commission the internationally-renowned Canadian organization MASS LBP to organize, oversee, and certify the process.²

To enhance the representativeness of the Assembly, 'citizens' would be defined as all Canadians and permanent residents aged 16 or older. Adequate funding would be allotted – and a range of financial, practical, technical, and other supports provided – to ensure that all those selected would be in a position to accept and volunteer their time.

Timeline and Format

The Assembly would meet in plenary session for 18 days in total, with reasonable intervals between sessions, over a 9-month period. One equivalent working-week each – spread over three successive weekends – would be devoted to considering Canada's past, present, and possible policies related to nuclear weapons and disarmament. The Assembly would open with a two-day session, and close with a one-day session. Due to geographic and other considerations, sessions would be held in a virtual format.

Rules, Procedures & Principles

The Rules & Procedures should be based on those adopted at successive Citizens' Assemblies convened by the Oireachtas, the Irish Parliament³, grounded in six 'key principles':

1. **Openness:** "The Citizens' Assembly will operate with complete transparency with all plenary meetings being broadcast live...and all documentation freely available."
2. **Fairness:** "it is important that we allow the full spectrum of views to be heard on every issue and that our briefing material for Assembly members is of the highest quality."

² MASS LBP, www.masslbp.com.

³ See An Tionól Saoránach/The Citizens' Assembly, www.citizensassembly.ie/en/previous-assemblies/2020-2021-citizens-assembly-on-gender-equality/about-the-citizens-assembly/key-principles-rules-procedures/.

3. **Equality of voice:** “Each member will be given an opportunity to voice their opinions.”
4. **Efficiency:** “the Assembly will make best use of our limited time together and ensure that all documentation is circulated in advance”.
5. **Respect:** “it is important that members can freely and confidently make contributions and express their views without fear of personal attacks or criticism”;
6. **Collegiality:** “we will work together in a spirit of friendship as we embark on this task.”

The detailed design and preparation of the Assembly, including selection and invitation of witnesses, would be undertaken by a Parliamentary Research Unit, working in consultation with an independent Expert Advisory Group drawn from academia and civil society. Members of the Research Unit and Advisory Group would be available to provide guidance and additional information to the Chairperson and Assembly members. The primary duty of the Chairperson – a former senior public servant (e.g. a judge) appointed by the House of Commons Foreign Affairs and International Trade Committee – would be to ensure that the rules, procedures, and guiding principles are followed at all times, and to consider any requests from Assembly members for additional testimony or documentation. As in the Irish case, the Chairperson would also head a Steering Group working to support the Assembly in “the efficient and effective discharge of its role and functions”.

Assembly members would be responsible for drafting all recommendations. Wherever possible, recommendations should be adopted by consensus. Where consensus proves elusive, a secret ballot would be held. Only those suggestions securing at least a two-thirds majority would be included in the final list of recommendations to Parliament. Dissenting opinions on all adopted recommendations would be included in the Assembly’s final report, together with the text of all recommendations rejected, or failing to secure a two-thirds majority.

Assembly members would agree to refrain from public commentary or media interviews until the presentation of the final report. Assembly members would further agree not to seek or receive any outside briefings or meetings related to the topics under review, and to immediately report to the Chairperson any attempts at outside interference.

Model Canadian Citizens' Assembly for Nuclear Disarmament: Basic Outline and Structure

1. Opening Ceremony and Introductory Session
2. The Past: Canada, Nuclear Weapons, and Nuclear Disarmament, 1945-2017
3. The Present: Canada, Nuclear Weapons, and Nuclear Disarmament Today
4. The Future: Options for Updating and Renewing Canada's Commitment to Nuclear Disarmament
5. Closing Ceremony and Presentation of Recommendations

1. Opening Ceremony and Introductory Session

Note on Venue

To set an appropriately somber, culturally sensitive tone for the Assembly, we recommend that the convening authority humbly request the Sahtúgot'ine Dene community of Déline (Fort Franklin) in the Northwest Territories to host an Opening Ceremony, attended in-person by the Chairperson and selected Assembly members. In the early 1940s, the community was the site of uranium mining crucial to the development, testing, and use of the world's first atomic weapons as part of the US-UK-Canada 'Manhattan Project'. For decades, the Sahtúgot'ine Dene – suffering grave and enduring harm (health, environmental, cultural) from the mining operations – were unaware that their traditional territory was the first stop on a 'Highway of the Atom' leading to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. When they found out, community leaders travelled to Hiroshima to deliver an apology (August 6, 1988) for their unwitting role in the tragedy.

If the community agreed to the request, the Opening Ceremony should, we suggest, begin with its members telling their story, literally locating the task before the Assembly – considering how best Canada can work to help eliminate the nuclear threat – in the context of nuclear colonialism: the massively disproportionate impact of nuclear weapons production and testing on Indigenous communities around the world.

In addition, given that the extraordinary experience – and apology – of the Sahtúgot'ine Dene remains largely unknown to the general public (including many politicians and policy-makers), such a revelatory, tone-setting Opening to the Assembly would help introduce a broader theme likely to feature throughout its work: peace and disarmament education in Canada.

Regardless of venue, the Opening Ceremony should acknowledge the vital contribution of Indigenous experiences and perspectives to any informed discussion of Canadian nuclear weapons and disarmament policy. It should also underscore the historic nature of the Assembly – the first such undertaking of its kind, anywhere in the world – and the consequent heavy responsibility of its members to rise to the challenge.

The Opening Ceremony should be followed by an introductory, 1-day session providing an overview of contemporary nuclear risks and dangers, and a preview of the Assembly's work plan, followed by a preliminary exchange of views.

2. The Past

From the Manhattan Project to the Ban Treaty: Canada, Nuclear Weapons, and Nuclear Disarmament, 1945-2017

“In keeping with the spirit of open academic inquiry it would be possible – just possible – to develop a theory...that Canada was not a nuclear power. But such a finding would fly in the face of overwhelming evidence that Canada was both shaped by, and helped to shape, the atomic age – that Canada is and was a nuclear state.”

- Timothy Andrews Sayles, *The Nuclear North: Histories of Canada in the Atomic Age*, Edited by Susan Colbourn and Timothy Andrews Sayle, UBC Press, 2020.

Day One: In at the Beginning – Canada’s Manhattan Project

How extensive and crucial was Canada’s contribution to the Manhattan Project? How damaging were the health, environmental, and cultural impacts of Canada’s atomic war effort? How did the Canadian state assess, and explain to the public, the significance of its role in the making of the new ‘American’ superweapon?

Possible witnesses: Dr. Peter van Wyck, author of *The Highway of the Atom*; Dr. Robert Bothwell, historian; Gordon Edwards, Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility.

Day Two: Hiroshima and Nagasaki

What were – and are – the humanitarian and environmental consequences of the atomic bombings? What were the initial Canadian narratives about the justification for the bombings, and the implications of atomic weapons for post-war Canadian and global security? Why did Canada make an early decision not to become a nuclear-weapon state?

Possible witnesses: Setsuko Thurlow, Canadian peace activist and hibakusha (Hiroshima survivor); David Yun, Canadian Red Cross; Dr. Robert Bothwell, historian.

Day Three: Nuclear Weapons v. Nuclear Disarmament – Canada’s Cold War Record

Through the long, roller-coaster Cold War era, how did Canada seek to balance – and prioritize – its dual commitment to nuclear deterrence, through its membership of NATO, and nuclear disarmament, particularly after the 1970 entry-into-force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)? Why and how did Canada’s nuclear weapons policies become issues of major domestic concern and controversy, between and within the two main federal parties (and society more broadly), from the 1950s to the 1980s? As the Cold War ended, what was Canada’s strategy and vision for nuclear disarmament?

Possible witnesses: Dr. David Bercuson, Centre for Military, Security and Strategic Studies, University of Calgary; Dr. Susan Colbourn, security studies analyst; Dr. John Polanyi, Nobel Laureate in Chemistry; Dr. Ernie Regehr, Senior Fellow in Arctic Security and Defence at The Simons Foundation; John Clearwater,

author of *US Nuclear Weapons in Canada*; Douglas Roche, former Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament; Dr. Michael D. Stephenson, historian.

Day Four: Nuclear Weapons v. Nuclear Disarmament – Canada’s Post Cold War Record, 1990-2010

Why was Canada dubbed ‘the nuclear nag’ in NATO in the 1990s? How did Canada’s embrace of the ‘human security’ agenda affect its post-Cold War approach to disarmament in general, and nuclear disarmament in particular? How effectively did Canada weigh the risks to European and international security of NATO expansion? What was the impact on Canada’s nuclear and national security calculus of the 9/11 terror attacks? What diplomatic and political response did Canada mount to the drastic American turn from nuclear arms control and disarmament, and multilateralism more generally, in the first decade of the 21st century?

Possible witnesses: Dr. Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1996-2000; Peggy Mason, former Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament; Paul Meyer, former Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament (former Chair of the Canadian Pugwash Group); Dr. Keith B. Payne, Chair, US Strategic Command Senior Advisory Group.

Day Five: To Ban or Not to Ban? Canada’s Defining Nuclear Dilemma, 2010-2017

What was Canada’s reaction to and role in ‘the Humanitarian Initiative’ emerging after the 2010 NPT Review Conference? Why did Canada refuse to sign ‘the Humanitarian Pledge’ on nuclear weapons and refuse to participate in UN-mandated negotiations on a nuclear prohibition treaty? How credible are Canada’s three core objections to the Treaty: that it undermines the NPT; that because the nuclear-armed states oppose it, it is (to quote Prime Minister Trudeau) “sort of useless”; and that it contains no adequate mechanisms for verifying treaty compliance?

Possible witnesses: Ray Acheson, Director, Reaching Critical Will program of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF); Dr. Peter Huessy, Atlantic Council; Cesar Jaramillo, Executive Director, Project Ploughshares; Dr. Zia Mian, Program on Science and Global Security, Princeton University; Dave Perry, President Canadian Global Affairs Institute; Setsuko Thurlow, Canadian peace activist and hibakusha.

3. The Present

Commitments, Conflicts, Contradictions: Canada, Nuclear Weapons, and Nuclear Disarmament Today

Day One: The Crumbling Cornerstone? Canada and the NPT

The last two NPT Review Conferences (2015 and – COVID-delayed – 2022) ended in failure to agree a Final Declaration or Action Plan, leading many to declare the NPT regime in unprecedented peril. What role did Canada seek to play in these two crucial Conferences? What are the strengths and weaknesses of Canada's commitment to a 'step-by-step' approach to 'creating the conditions for nuclear disarmament,' eschewing the purportedly 'unrealistic' approach of the TPNW? As nuclear risks and dangers escalate (something all states agree on), what is Canada's current strategy for reviving the NPT – and does it have a strategy for 'bridge-building' between pro- and anti-TPNW factions in the NPT?

Possible witnesses: Dr. John Borrie, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR); Dr. Christopher Ford, former US Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation; Tariq Rauf, former senior IAEA official and Expert Advisor to Canada's NPT delegations from 1987-2000; Matt Korda, nuclear weapons expert at the Federation of American Scientists; Peggy Mason, former Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament.

Day Two: Nothing to Do With Us? Canada, the TPNW, and Other Roads to Zero

Unlike four fellow-NATO states (Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, Norway) Canada declined to observe the June 2022 First Meeting of States Parties to the TPNW as an observer. Was this decision justified? Are there aspects of the TPNW – for example, victim assistance and environmental remediation areas still deeply-scarred by nuclear use, mining, production, and testing – where Canada could make a significant contribution, without prejudice to its future stance regarding treaty membership? Is Canada prepared to actively follow *alternatives* paths to Global Zero – e.g. negotiations leading to a Nuclear Weapons Convention, paralleling the extant Conventions prohibiting biological and chemical weapons – or are *all* realistic routes currently blocked by the currently degraded and decaying international security situation, particularly with regard to US-Russia-China relations?

Possible witnesses: Dr. Hans Binnendijk, Atlantic Council; Dr. Julie Clark, Canadian Global Affairs Institute; Bianca Mugenyi, Director, Canadian Foreign Policy Institute; Robin Collins and Dr. Sylvie Lemieux, co-Chairs, Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (CCANW); Dr. Stephen Saideman, Norman Paterson School of International Affairs; Dr. Heather Williams, Defence Studies Department and Centre for Science and Security Studies (CSSS), King's College, London.

Day Three: The Limits of Loyalty? Canada and NATO's Nuclear Policy

Many Canadians are unaware of the full extent and details of NATO's nuclear policy, posture, and doctrine, and of Canada's participation in the Alliance's nuclear war planning and exercises. What

does NATO's embrace of 'deterrence' actually entail, and how has its posture evolved to meet both new opportunities to disarm and new security challenges? As previously considered, Canada has a track-record as a nuclear policy reformer within the Alliance; what might such a reform agenda look like today, and why is Canada currently seemingly loathe to play such a role?

Possible witnesses: Robert Baines, President, NATO Association of Canada; Commander Alan Brown, Canadian Forces College; Professor Michael Byers, Canada Research Chair in Global Politics and International Law; Major Tim Dunne, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) Nova Scotia; Dr. David Gompert, US Naval Academy; Dr. Rob Huebert, Macdonald-Laurier Institute; Dr. Colin Robertson, Vice President, Canadian Global Affairs Institute; Dr. Jennifer Allen Simons, The Simons Foundation; Dr. Erika Simpson, author of *NATO and The Bomb*.

Day Four: Gender and Disarmament – Canada, Nuclear Weapons, and a 'Feminist Foreign Policy'

The Liberal government of Justin Trudeau has committed itself to developing (though it has yet to unveil) a 'feminist foreign policy'. What implications might such a commitment entail for Canada's current approach to nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament, and to process and practice with regard to the making (and reviewing) of defence and foreign policy more generally?

Possible witnesses: Charlotte J. Akin, Canadian Voice of Women for Peace; Erin Hunt, Mines Action Canada; Allison Pytlak, WILPF Canada.

Day Five: If Not Deterrence...What? Canada, Common Security, and General and Complete Disarmament

An abiding fear of the atomic age is that nuclear disarmament will 'make the world safe for conventional war' between major powers: a non-nuclear World War Three likely – while not ending life on Earth – to kill tens of millions and irrevocably wreck the UN-based world order. A converse argument points to the failure of nuclear weapons to deter devastating conventional conflict, and to the pattern of nuclear-possessing states being 'emboldened by the Bomb' to commit conventional aggression (e.g. in Afghanistan, invaded by both nuclear superpowers, Iraq, and now Ukraine).

Throughout UN history, the goal of nuclear disarmament has always been related to the even grander aim of General and Complete Disarmament (GCD), the reduction of conventional capability to the point where war between states becomes impractical and obsolete. Between *here* – a war-torn, heavily-nuclearized world – and *there* – a nuclear-free, War-free world – lie a range of options and models for fostering 'common security,' as for example envisaged by the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) at the end of the Cold War. What is Canada's approach to 'common security' in the 21st century? How does it conceive and articulate the crucial link between nuclear and conventional disarmament? Does it still subscribe to GCD – the radical demilitarization of world politics – as a desirable and feasible goal in the decades ahead?

Possible witnesses: Dr. Walter Dorn, President, World Federalist Movement Canada; Paul Meyer, former Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament; Dr. Richard Falk, Nuclear Age Peace Foundation; Dr. Andrea

Charron, Director of the Centre for Defence and Security Studies at the University of Manitoba; Dr. Dan Plesch, Professor of Diplomacy and Strategy, SOAS, UK.

4. The Future

Operation Crossroads?

Recommendations for Renewing Canada's Commitment to Nuclear Disarmament

During their last full week of deliberations, Assembly members would be tasked with drafting and adopting recommendations on Canadian strategy and policy to advance nuclear disarmament. As aforementioned, only those recommendations adopted by consensus or at least a two-thirds majority would be presented to Parliament for – after committee hearings and full debates in both chambers – a definite response.

On Day One, the Chairperson would provide a review of the Assembly's work, summarizing the main issues raised, particular points of interest and concern, etc. A general debate would then be held.

On Days Two to Four, Assembly members would introduce draft recommendations for debate and amendment. All members would be free to introduce resolutions on any topic raised in the three main sessions. Debate would then ensue on each proposed recommendation. During this period a Panel of Witnesses (selected by the Chair after consultation with the Assembly) would be on stand-by, ready to answer questions or provide clarification.

On Day Five, recommendations (no longer open to amendment) would be placed before the Assembly for final decision, followed by a final session for comment and reflection.

5. Closing Ceremony and Presentation of Recommendations

While the Chairperson and Assembly should be entrusted to invite dignitaries and speakers, we would hope and urge that honoured guests would include Setsuko Thurlow, the Sahtúgot'ine Dene, and other survivors and victims of nuclear violence.

Obviously, Canadian parliamentarians (current and former) would be invited to attend, virtually or in-person, together with leaders from other levels of government. In addition, parliamentarians from other states, from nuclear-armed to Ban Treaty members, should be invited and encouraged to follow Canada's example.

In due course, a final report on the world's first Citizens' Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament – complete with transcripts, testimony, and supporting documentation – should be published in print and on-line, and distributed as widely as possible to libraries, schools, universities, etc.

