

October 3, 2019

Dear members of Mines Action Canada,

Thank you for writing, for providing us with the opportunity to speak to humanitarian disarmament and share the Green Party of Canada's platform, and for your advocacy. Please find our response below.

Best regards,

Steve Parkinson  
Director of Policy and Correspondence  
Green Party of Canada

### **Conventional Weapons**

1. Canada is a State Party to the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions, which comprehensively prohibits cluster munitions and provides the framework for clearance of cluster munition remnants and assistance to victims. If your party forms the government after the 2019 election, what steps will Canada take to promote universalization of the Convention on Cluster Munitions?

When the Harper Administration finally got around to ratifying the Convention on Cluster Munitions six years after its adoption, it did so with shamefully inappropriate legislation. Canada's ratification violates not only the letter but the spirit of the law. The loopholes related to investment and in interoperability are unacceptably wide, but the Liberal government failed to fix them.

The Green Party will lead by example and close these loopholes to ensure that investment in cluster munitions is expressly prohibited, and that Canada does not engage in missions with non-state parties that will be using cluster munitions. We will also amend the existing legislation to include positive obligations under the Convention, including a commitment to promote universalization of the treaty. The Green Party will make the imperative of humanitarian disarmament a priority.

2. If your party forms the next government, how will Canada stigmatize the use of cluster munitions by any state - even our allies?

The work to stigmatize the use of cluster munitions, especially by our allies, must begin by taking our responsibilities under Article 21 of the Convention seriously. Instead of leaning heavily on a reading of 21(3) that negates our responsibilities under 21(1) and 21(2), we must reorient our approach to fulfill our obligation to inform allies of our common duties under the Convention. Canada must also refuse to participate in any mission that uses cluster munitions.

We must make this clear in the planning phases of the mission, through both political and military channels. Canada's position must be absolute: the use of cluster munitions in a joint operation will be a deal-breaker. We must speak out publicly when cluster munitions are used, including by our allies.

3. The International Campaign to Ban Landmines has issued a completion challenge for all states to join the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines and for all mine clearance to be completed by 2025. Canada, as a State Party to the Ottawa Treaty, committed to work towards the goal of completion by 2025 via the Maputo Declaration in 2014. If your party forms the government after the 2019 election, what concrete steps will the government take to ensure the work of the 1997 Ottawa Treaty is completed?

The Green Party is fully committed to fulfilling Canada's obligations under the Ottawa Treaty. Green MPs will work to keep Canada on track to follow the Maputo Action Plan with the goal of banning landmines, clearing all existing landmines, and supporting all victims and survivors by 2025. MPs will be guided by the priorities of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, including:

- Working towards the universalization of the treaty in diplomatic fora;
- Stigmatizing landmine use and educating actors about their effects;
- Funding and pressuring states to clear mines; and,
- Giving survivors the resources they need to recover physically, psychologically, socially, and economically.

4. For many years, Canada was a leading (top five) donor to mine action and victim assistance programs. Canada has fallen out of the top five supporters of mine action and in some years out of the top ten supporters. If your party forms the next government, what steps will you take to return Canada to its traditional position of leadership on mine action funding? Would your government consider reinstating the position of Ambassador for Mine Action?

Canada can return to a leadership role in supporting mine victims. Green MPs will advocate for a renewed financial commitment to mine action and victim assistance programs. The Green Party supports Mines Action Canada's call for at least \$1 per Canadian per year to be dedicated towards mine action.

5. Canada recently acceded to the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty - the world's first Treaty to regulate the global arms trade. In light of Canada's accession to the Treaty, will your government re-examine some of Canada's existing arms exports, including to Saudi Arabia or other countries of concern?

Yes. A Green government will cancel the contracts to provide Saudi Arabia with armoured vehicles and re-examine Canada's other existing arms exports. We should not be conceding our sovereignty or principles just to gain access to markets.

6. Countries with known human rights abuses have little trouble obtaining weapons. Notwithstanding your party's position on the Arms Trade Treaty, what steps will your government take to ensure that Canadian weapons do not end up in the hands of those known or suspected to abuse human rights?

The Green Party is committed to global arms control. Canada must fulfill its obligations under the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. This includes our commitment to restrict the brokering, financing, transporting, dealing, and transferring of all illicit arms. In order to fulfil these and other obligations, Canada needs strict export control on arms to ensure that Canadian weapons are not sold to human rights abusers, either directly or through third parties.

## **Nuclear Weapons**

7. In response to the unacceptable humanitarian harm caused by nuclear weapons and the risks that nuclear weapons continue to pose to humanity, 122 states negotiated the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in 2017. Canada was not one of those states. If your party forms the government after the 2019 election, will Canada undertake a study of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons?

Yes. The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists has chosen to keep its Doomsday Clock set at two minutes to midnight for a second year, citing a lack of progress on the dual threats of climate change and nuclear war. This is the closest the clock has ever been to midnight since the end of the Cold War. Yet, the current government has shown no leadership on nuclear disarmament, and it failed to attend the 2017 Conference for a Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The Green Party of Canada will ratify the TPNW, adopted by 122 countries at the Conference, and will promote the effective deployment of multilateral mechanisms aimed at eliminating all nuclear stockpiles and preventing the rebuilding of nuclear arsenals. We will reclaim our country's traditional leadership role on disarmament, advocating the conversion of all military industries in Canada and worldwide towards peaceful and sustainable purposes. We will do this by acting multilaterally, notably through the United Nations.

## **Election 2019 Humanitarian Disarmament Policy Questionnaire**

8. For more than six years, there have been a number of humanitarian statements about nuclear weapons with wide support at the United Nations. Canada has not joined any of the main humanitarian statements partially due to objections about the inclusion of the phrase 'under any circumstances' in the sentence, "it is in the interest of the very survival of humanity that nuclear weapons are never used again, under any circumstances." If your party forms the government after the 2019 election, will Canada state clearly that the use of nuclear weapons under any circumstances is unacceptable? If not, could you please articulate under what circumstances your party believes the use of nuclear weapons is appropriate?

The Green Party's position on humanitarian disarmament is simple. We believe that the



humanitarian imperative trumps all other political considerations. There are no circumstances under which the use of nuclear weapons is appropriate. The Green Party is committed towards working towards the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

## **Emerging Issues on Protecting Civilians in Armed Conflict**

9. Canada is participating in the multilateral meetings held since 2014 on technical, legal, ethical, and operational concerns relating to “lethal autonomous weapons systems” or “killer robots” but has said little and has yet to issue national policy on the topic. Autonomous weapons systems are not armed drones, but instead they are future weapons that would be able to select and fire upon targets without meaningful human control. As of August 2019, Canada does not have a clear position on autonomous weapons systems but leading Artificial Intelligence experts from across the country have been calling for Canadian leadership to prohibit fully autonomous weapons systems. If your party forms the government after 2019, how will your government respond to the concerns raised, including the call to pre-emptively ban systems that would select and attack targets without meaningful human control?

The Green Party will work to pre-emptively ban “lethal autonomous weapons systems,” also known as killer robots. This must include a legislated ban on the research, development, deployment, stockpiling, transferring, trading, financing, and use of killer robots, as well as their use by our allies. While the Green Party already has reservations about the humanitarian effects of the proliferation of the use of armed drones, taking humans out of the equation is a red line that must never be crossed. The Green Party supports the work of the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots in “calling for a new international instrument to preemptively ban the development, production, and use of fully autonomous weapons, achieved through a new CCW [Convention on Conventional Weapons] protocol or another process.”

10. Recent research confirms that when heavy explosive weapons (weapons with wide area effects) are used in populated areas the vast majority of casualties are civilians. The Government of Austria is convening a conference to discuss the UN Secretary-General’s proposal to develop a political declaration to prevent harm from the use of explosive weapons in populated areas on October 1- 2, 2019. Will your party support the Secretary General’s proposal, and review and strengthen domestic policies and practices on the use of explosive weapons?

The Green Party will support an international political commitment to avoid the use of heavy explosive weapons in populated areas. We cannot simply accept civilian casualties, trauma, and devastation as collateral damage. It is estimated that 26,000 civilians died in the War in Afghanistan. When civilians pay the price for war, the effects last for generations. The Green Party will review domestic policy, legislation, and practice to develop operating policies that reduce civilian harm.

International law has much to say about this issue, stronger standards are both possible and necessary to ensure that civilians do not pay the costs of war. An international commitment would help to stigmatise the use of heavy explosives in populated areas and ensure there are consequences for those who ignore it.



11. The use of armed drones for extrajudicial killings of suspected terrorist by States in clandestine operations remain largely unchallenged, while these strikes keep killing and wounding civilians without accountability and transparency from those responsible. The growing proliferation of drones, being perceived as an effective cheap and risk-free tool in military operations by states and non-states actors needs to be addressed to prevent those systems ending up in the hands of the wrong actors. If your party forms the next government, what will be the Government of Canada's policy in regards to the international legal framework, in particular international human rights law and international humanitarian law, on the use of armed drones in and outside armed conflict and how will your party bolster international efforts to improve regulations of their export?

We need to take the humanitarian impacts of drones more seriously and to look at the consequences of our allies' policies and actions. The United States program of drone warfare has had devastating impacts on the people of Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Somalia. While it is possible that drones can play a productive role in peacekeeping efforts and can reduce civilian casualties, we cannot expect any positive developments without a serious, international conversation about the damage their use is currently inflicting. The Green Party will work towards the development of an international legal framework to ensure that the use of drones is under the strictest control and fully respects international humanitarian law.

### **Election 2019 Humanitarian Disarmament Policy Questionnaire**

12. Depleted uranium weapons have come under international scrutiny in recent years due to significant concerns about the long term health consequences of their use. If your party forms the next government, what will Canada's policy be on the use of depleted uranium weapons? What will be Canada's position be regarding providing technical and financial assistance in order to aid decontamination of affected states and reduce the risks to civilians?

The effects of the use of depleted uranium (DU) are long-lasting and devastating. As Green Party Leader Elizabeth May wrote to the Minister of National Defence following Stephen Harper's decision to join the mission in Iraq, "The use of more than 400,000 kg of DU in US campaigns in 1991 and 2003 has had lasting and heartbreaking effects on human health and the environment in Iraq. The lack of any current obligations to assist with the clearance of DU has ensures that Iraq has not yet recovered. DU can contaminate soil and groundwater and its use generates huge quantities of contaminated military scrap and can create hotspots of persistent contamination. Recent conflicts have seen it used in predominantly civilian areas and managing its legacy is technically challenging and costly. [...] While the US has never released the coordinates of all the uses of DU in Iraq, the Iraqi government has called for international help to clean up contaminated sites and for an international treaty ban on the use of DU. The United Nations General Assembly has already considered four resolutions on DU. Canada has remained in the minority, abstaining each time." In that letter, Ms. May urged the government to "encourage its coalition partners not to use DU during operations in Iraq or Syria, state publicly that it has done so, and clarify its policy on DU use in joint operations." The Minister never wrote back.



The Green Party position is clear: DU is an indiscriminate weapon that must be banned. Further, we must stigmatise its use internationally and refuse to allow our allies to use it in joint operations. The calls for assistance from countries already contaminated by DU cannot be ignored. Canada can and must assist them.

13. The environmental damage caused by armed conflicts harms civilians, damages ecosystems and impedes sustainable development, problems worsened by permissive laws, low prioritisation and inadequate systems of response. If your party forms the government after the 2019 election, what contribution will Canada make towards international efforts to address the environmental dimensions of armed conflicts?

Canada has a long way to go if we are to establish and promote strong environmental protections in times of conflict. We need to strengthen the regime of international law to ensure that environmental devastation does not happen with impunity. Where conflict cannot be avoided in its entirety, combat must take place under the strictest possible conditions, both to minimize the civilian toll and the environmental toll. The Green Party supports clearly defining “widespread, long-term and severe” damage to the environment, as prohibited in Protocol I (1977) to the Geneva Conventions to uphold environmental protection in conflict situations. Green MPs will call for a permanent UN body to monitor violations of international law and to address compensation for victims, including environmental damage. This body should be based on the UN Compensation Commission that was established by the Security Council following the First Gulf War.

14. There are a number of links between the Women, Peace and Security Agenda based on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and humanitarian disarmament. Canada’s National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security highlights these links in the theory of change document. There is a lot of international evidence that when women are involved in peace processes the rate of success is greatly improved. If your party forms the next government, how will Canada strengthen the links between humanitarian disarmament and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda?

The Green Party strongly supports Canada’s National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and believes that the links between humanitarian disarmament and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda could be strengthened through the appointment of a well-supported Women, Peace and Security Ambassador. This would enable the government to work more closely and frequently with the civil society organizations that are already doing great work in this area.