

PEACE TRAIN CANADA GUIDING PRINCIPLES

September 10, 2026

Peace Train Canada (PTC) is a citizen led effort to reclaim and renew our solidarity and Canadian identity as a culture of peace. We are calling on our government to commit to this culture of peace by establishing and funding an integrated, independent Canadian Centre for Peace and Justice.

INTRODUCTION

DEFINING PEACE

The basis of enduring peace is the willing cooperation of free peoples in a world in which, relieved of the menace of aggression, all may enjoy social and economic security in the presence of justice and freedom from violence, oppression, fear, and want.

This definition combines salient points from the following four excellent contributions to our understanding of peace:

The Declaration of St. James Palace

In 1941, the first joint statement of goals produced by allied nations included a well-rounded definition of peace:

The only true basis of enduring peace is the willing cooperation of free peoples in a world in which, relieved of the menace of aggression, all may enjoy social and economic security

The United Nations Charter

The international community united in collaboration to establish the UN Charter in 1945 and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, resulting in the following milestone in our understanding of peace:

Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world....and the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people.

(Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Preamble)

Johan Galtung

In the 1960's, Johan Galtung (Norwegian sociologist and key pioneer of peace studies.) defined peace as not merely the absence of war, but as the absence of all forms of violence—direct, structural, and cultural. He introduced the terms **negative peace** (absence of direct violence/war) and **positive peace** (social justice, cooperation, and conflict transformation) that are in common use today.

The following three quotes capture his contribution to our understanding of peace:

By peace we mean the capacity to transform conflicts with empathy, without violence, and creatively—a never-ending process.

Negative peace is the absence of direct (personal) violence, while positive peace is the absence of structural violence.

Positive peace is filled with positive content such as restoration of relationships, the creation of social systems that serve the needs of the whole population and the constructive resolution of conflict.

Ursula Franklin

In the 1990's, Ursula Franklin (renowned German-Canadian physicist, author, and University of Toronto professor for more than 40 years) famously linked peace to the absence of fear:

Peace is not the absence of war—peace is the absence of fear.

A CULTURE OF PEACE

The vision of PTC is to breathe new life into our identity as a culture of peace. It emerges from the collective spirit of individuals who uphold peace, justice, and freedom as foundations for flourishing and understand them to be, by nature, universal.

Such a culture is made of and by, “we the peoples,” otherwise known as civil society. We are the global majority – most of the 8 billion people who get up every morning loving and caring for their families, for others, and for the place they inhabit.

A culture of peace nurtures the disciplines of patience, non-aggression, open inquiry, emotional intelligence, active listening, careful dialogue, diplomacy and creative approaches to problem solving.

It promotes justice by reducing structural violence, addressing inequality, defending human rights, and creating a social order that ensures equitable resource distribution and fair, accessible institutions.

The Global Peace Index 2025 shows that peaceful societies are marked by wellbeing, happiness, higher GDP growth, lower interest rates, greater political stability, and more resilience to shocks.

Many of us were born into such a society where the institutions of truth and freedom made our own individual freedom and agency possible. This gift is perpetual only if it is consciously nurtured and passed on.

Peace Industrial Complex

A culture of peace is held within a net of economic and social institutions from education and health care to sustainable energy and public infrastructure that provide social cohesion, prosperity, and regenerative productivity. It ensures individual, cultural, social, ecological, and institutional peace that are the foundations of prosperity.

This net is known as the Peace Industrial Complex, a term first used officially by US Representative John F. Seiberling in his 1972 Congressional address, advocating for a structural, economic, and political shift away from the Military Industrial Complex.

The current competitive, slippery slope of military expenditures at home and abroad is crowding out investment in many areas of the Peaceful Industrial Complex that underpin social cohesion, contributing to its steady global decline. This will continue unabated without adequate investment.

Military Industrial Complex

The antithesis of the Peace Industrial Complex is the Military Industrial Complex (MIC), a term coined by President Eisenhower, referring to a "permanent armament industry" that can drive foreign policy and prioritize profit over national interests. It resides in the invisible corridors of power, sustained by the immense lobby of an unelected elite and corporations striving for profitable military contracts.

In an economy captured by the MIC, there is a deep integration between the government, military leadership, and private defense contractors (e.g., Lockheed Martin, Boeing). It is fueled by lobbying, where defense companies are major beneficiaries of public funds.

Massive expenditures on defense and weaponry are justified by generating a perception of constant, existential, or new threats (e.g., terrorism, superpower competition), making high defense budgets appear necessary.

Within such a system, public resources are directed toward military technology and weapons systems rather than infrastructure or social and environmental programs.

History shows that the Military Industrial Complex parasitizes on the peaceful one and is capable of manufacturing unnecessary wars for profit.

A world in arms, as Eisenhower said, "is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all in any true sense."

The strength of peace necessarily requires counteracting what has been described as

our civilizational cult of war and the military industrial complex's funding its planet-sized house of worship. (Maria Popova, Bulgarina-American author, poet, and editor of The Marginalian)

TEN GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF PEACE TRAIN CANADA

1. PEACE IS PRIMARY

Peace is the domain of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

In the face of ever-increasing violent wars, nuclear threat, climate disruption, and humanitarian crisis, Peace Train Canada (PTC) bears witness to peace as a fundamental condition for survival and optimal functioning in our world.

It is a process of constant adjustment toward enduring balance and stability, like the process of homeostasis that allows living systems, like those inside our body, to regulate and respond to each other for highest overall health and functioning.

In this sense, peace is a stable state of dynamic equilibrium. The dynamic part is the ongoing response to constantly changing variables. The equilibrium part is the resilient tendency to heal, to bounce back into balance and harmony.

Peace is carried in the perpetual renewal of love – for each other, our country, and our one mother earth. It is channeled by individuals, groups, and societies committed to the principles of relational harmony and non-violent coexistence for this and future generations.

Holding peace often entails holding the tension of opposing sides – not ‘strung out’ to the point of breaking and not too loose to the point of flaccid complicity. This skilful tuning instills confidence and the ability to remain comfortable in chaos.

Choosing the path of peace is an intelligent perspective gained by constant surveillance, not to search and destroy difference, but to seek and discover a middle way forward – a shared path on the common ground we all stand on.

2. PEACE IS PRAGMATIC

The quest for peace is often dismissed as a naïve, sentimental, idealistic moral option. In reality, it is a calculated, principled pragmatism. It is a realistic, decision-making framework that balances core values, such as justice and human rights, with practical steps toward workable solutions within the constraints and complexities of conflict.

At times, a country must deter, protect, and respond to threats against national security. In such cases, maintaining peace and defending against aggression are not contradictory.

However, the main objective of peaceful conflict resolution is prioritizing pragmatic, long-term solutions over destructive short-term conflict thereby maintaining the flow of social, environmental, and economic well-being.

Peace is not passive or pretty. It is shaped from the raw materials of disagreement, discord, and disaster. It grows out of the compost of our mistakes; humbly allowing that we all make them; courageously agreeing that we all can learn from them.

3. TRAIN IS A VERB

The motto of PTC is *Train is a verb. If you want peace, Train for Peace.*

Our capacity to cultivate peace in the face of conflict requires training in the most beneficial disciplines of discernment, patience, non-aggression, open inquiry, emotional intelligence, active listening, careful dialogue, diplomacy, and creative approaches to problem solving.

If we want peace, we must prepare and train for peace on a daily basis and transmit that power to citizens and every organ of society. That reality lies at the heart of PTC's request of government to establish and fund a centre that would serve as a hub for peace education, dialogue and training.

4. THE PREVENTION PRIORITY

The first line of intelligent defense is prevention. The key to preventing and de-escalating conflict and war is acknowledging and addressing its underlying causes and doing everything in our power to prevent war.

Diplomacy, active listening, understanding, and non-violent, open dialogue are the most constructive, protective, and cost-effective methods for resolving conflict while fostering regional and global stability, security, and prosperity.

Preventing and de-escalating conflict also require counteracting the mechanisms of propaganda, racism, superiority, separation and polarization that pave the way to war. This is a daunting task in an arena dominated by the Goliath power of the armament industry.

Populations are best served by 'good government,' skilled in and committed to preventing war.

5. THE GAIA PRINCIPLE

The challenge of our time as individuals, as nations, and as a species is to recognize, respect, and behave in accordance with the fundamental inter-connection and inter-dependence of all life on this planet.

The earth is a complex, self-regulating entity comprised of many entangled living systems. It is commonly personified as Gaia, the primordial "Mother of All" from Greek mythology, who emerged from chaos at the dawn of creation.

Gaia's condition reflects how we choose to nurture the dynamics of peace and harmony or turn away from them. Clearly, our choices have led to an unprecedented disregard and disruption of global homeostasis throwing multiple life-systems out of kilter and into terminal tipping points.

The ultimate affront to our grieving Gaia is war.

We share one earth and one set of integrated life-support systems - from ocean currents to the air we breathe.

To choose life, we must choose peace.

6. UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHTS

PTC cherishes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) as a common ethical framework to guide our global village. Canada and forty-nine other countries from around the world pulled it from the ashes of World War II and more than 60 million lives to make sure history would not repeat itself. Today, all 193 UN member states recognize the principles of the UDHR.

The UDHR:

- DECLARES that the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world is the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family.
- RECOGNIZES that disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which outrage the conscience of humankind.
- PROCLAIMS that a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want as the highest aspiration of the common people.
- WARNS that it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law.

Part of training for peace is *keeping this Declaration constantly in mind*, as pledged by the UN General Assembly.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a Universal Declaration of Human Responsibility.

PTC is calling our government and each one of us back to our responsibility to uphold the basics of justice, equality, freedom, security and well-being for all.

7. UPHOLD PEACE COMMITMENTS

Far from protest and demands for massive change, PTC is simply calling our country back to the promises it has already made in support of peace.

United Nations

Of critical importance is our promise to uphold the intent and values embedded in the UN Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty. This requires unflagging support for the United Nations itself.

Without the United Nations, the world has no accepted international framework for the evolution of world peace. Peace Train Canada urges people around the world to support and improve the United Nations and related institutions and initiatives dedicated to securing peace.

We agree with President Kennedy's sentiment, in his historic Strategy of Peace speech: *to focus on a more practical, more attainable peace - based not on a sudden revolution in human nature but on a gradual evolution in human institutions...*

Original NATO Intent

PTC opposes NATO's abandonment of its founding principles, as demonstrated in Secretary General Rutte's directive to "shift to a wartime mindset."

PTC calls on our government to resist this culture of war and adhere to the original intent for signing the NATO treaty, as summarized by Lester B. Pearson while setting the context for Canada's sweeping endorsement:

"This virtual unanimity reflected the views of Canadian people who feel deeply and instinctively that this treaty is not a pact for war, but a pledge for peace and progress."

Canada's leadership and unwavering insistence on NATO's second article, led to it being called the "Canada Clause". This article enjoins non-military cooperation among member states "... toward the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations by strengthening their free institutions ... and by promoting conditions of stability and well-being. They will seek to eliminate conflict in their international economic policies and will encourage economic collaboration between any or all of them."

Canadians continue to hold a deep aspiration that our country take leadership in disarming reactive, fear-based attitudes at the heart of polarization and war and in moving us all into a common security.

Peacekeeping

Since Lester B. Pearson received the 1957 Nobel Prize for his work in helping create the first United Nations peacekeeping force, Canadians have identified the nation's peacekeeping role, as the country's top contribution in international affairs.

Unfortunately, Canada's reputation as an independent, peaceful, middle power has been increasingly compromised over the last thirty years. It is no longer respected as a peacemaker.

Our government rejected the UN Declaration of the Right to Peace, terminated its national peace centers, and collapsed its contribution of personnel deployed to UN peace operations by one hundred-fold, from well over 3000 in the 1990s to under 30. It continually lauds its Elsie Initiative, to help increase the meaningful participation of military women in UN peace operations, while having only a few deployed. Meanwhile, decisions are being made to drastically increase military spending while cutting Global Affairs.

These changes are gnawing at our cultural identity and are bleeding our ability to wage peace. PTC is committed to raising the voice and spirit of Canadians committed to the strength and common security inherent in the pursuit of peace.

Nuclear Disarmament

Accidental or premeditated nuclear arms deployment poses one of the greatest risks to life on earth. This is reflected in the doomsday clock of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists now set at 85 seconds to midnight—the most dangerous setting in its history.

Key treaties that have served as guardrails against nuclear catastrophe have expired or are under threat. One of the few survivors, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), supported by Canada, has no current incremental timeline for de-escalation or disarmament. Instead, after over 50 years of treaty negotiations, we are witnessing nine increasingly agitated nuclear-armed states participating in an unprecedented modernization and escalation of nuclear arms to compete in a defense strategy based on what is fittingly called MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction).

Security through provocation of mutually assured destruction is terrorism. It is mentacide, where health, right down to the helix of life, is bartered for power and supremacy. It is theft of our mental stability, and our physical resources to care for each other and the poly crises at hand, including the climate emergency. We must overcome the cognitive deficit required to compete in the nuclear arms race.

The only way to eliminate the threat of nuclear weapons is to eliminate the weapons. In recognition of this reality, the legally binding Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) prohibits the development, testing, and possession of these weapons. It clearly affirms the intent of the NPT as stated in NPT Article VI:

Each of the parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

Peace Train Canada joins the global majority calling for the prohibition of nuclear weapons and encourages our country to start supporting and sending observers to the TPNW.

8. COPE WITH CONFLICT

Conflict is a normal part of everyday life as people are bound to have differing perceptions and views about many things. It arises as a disagreement between people holding what they consider are important but incompatible views, needs, ideas, or principles.

Conflict need not involve reactive, aggressive behaviors driven by fear, avoidance, and intense emotions such as anger and hatred. These destructive tendencies are most often a result of misunderstanding, miscommunication, and misguided views of separation and superiority.

Authentic action toward resolution and peace does not block, displace or destroy. It transforms what seems to be an intractable situation into one that is workable and, ultimately, settled in agreement.

Resolving conflict in a healthy way requires patience and training in skills such as active listening, understanding, and respectful dialogue. Resolution requires collaboration aimed at consensus regarding a mutually acceptable middle way forward. It maintains the flow of peaceful relationships and may even serve to strengthen them.

9. COUNTERACT WAR

Waging peace is not a neutral, passive aspiration, but a high-intensity engagement requiring fearless determination in the face of asymmetrical power structures that breed trauma, injustice, and immense human suffering. It entails pushing back, or counteracting the violence and fear of violence that are plaguing the world today.

Under the UN Charter, Canada has an obligation to counteract war by taking *effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace...*

Abhorrence of War

War is a failure of leadership. It is a disease that unleashes the grossest violations of human beings and their environment. It poisons and destroys the earth, aggravates the climate crisis, causes starvation, deepens poverty, forces migrations of peoples, wrecks the rule of law, multiplies the gap between rich and poor, paves the way for tyranny, and causes prolonged misery for the most vulnerable.

Consent to war opens governments and societies to manipulation by weapon makers and their lobbyists. It ruins hearts and minds, even of the so-called victors who take their own lives at an alarming rate every year.

Tragically and pathetically, war is blocking the timely global response necessary to address the meta-crisis at hand.

Give No Fear, Take No Lies

Fear is frequently used to manufacture consent for war, acting as a powerful psychological, political, and propaganda tool throughout history. Leaders and states often create, amplify, or exploit existential threats to justify military action, secure public support, and consolidate power. The pernicious spread of untrue, one-sided narratives to justify war and related atrocities is, in itself, an unacceptable violation of human rights and dignity. As these stories take hold, they incite fear, which paves the way for intolerance, mistrust, othering, authoritarianism, and consent to war.

One of the greatest things we can do for each other, our children, and grandchildren is give no fear. Such a gift requires building trust in the dynamics of peace, counteracting violence and misinformation by illuminating the facts, and holding truth to power.

Giving no fear also requires restraint regarding the burdens we are pushing on to the next generation, which Prime Minister Carney describes as “unfair, inequitable, and irresponsible.” Nothing could be more traumatic for that generation than to add the weight of war and fear of war to what they already carry.

Peace is always entwined with qualities of justice, freedom and truth. As these are the elements of a meaningful life, sustaining them sustains confidence and agency, even in the face of adversity.

Peace transforms the mindset of fear into one of calm, purposeful confidence.

10. UPHOLD TRUTH, FACTS, AND THE RULE OF LAW

The rule of law restrains and civilizes excessive power.

(Dennis Edney, The Rule of Law in an Age of Fear)

The Rule of Law ensures that society is governed by an agreed upon set of fair and stable laws that hold both government and citizens accountable.

It is essential that the rule of law protect human rights, as stated in the UDHR Preamble, *if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression*. To that end, PTC upholds the UN International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court.

The Rule of Law relies on independent judiciaries, open courts, and evidence-based decision-making to differentiate between fact and fiction. This is essential for the protection of human rights against arbitrary power.

Protecting journalists and trusted media sources is also essential to help determine and disseminate facts.

Without facts, you can't have truth. Without truth, you can't have trust. Without these three, we have no shared reality; we can't solve any problem, let alone the existential ones like climate change. We can't have journalism; we can't have communications; we can't have democracy.

(Maria Ressa, Filipino-American journalist and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate)

The free flow of information is foundational to peace. As the Global Peace Index indicates, societies with open, better information systems consistently rank higher on the Global Peace Index. Everything from business efficiency to prompt humanitarian responses relies on reliable information.

PTC supports and defends an open society with free inquiry, free speech, robust checks and balances on ruling power, and the authority of the Rule of Law.

CONCLUSION

The Peace Train, “sounding louder,” raises the voice of Canadians across the country committed to the basics of enduring stability, security, and human rights both here and abroad, as set forth in the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

PTC attests to peaceful means as fundamental to our health, well-being, and survival as a species, especially in this time of cascading poly-crisis.

National peace does not happen by accident. The guiding principles described above provide a pragmatic framework for building a culture of peace. This is made possible by governments and people who recognize the interdependence of all life on earth, who counteract violence, and who study and train in the ways of peace.

Moving the guiding principles for peace from theory into practice requires a concerted national focus. For that reason, PTC is calling on our government to establish and fund a Canadian Centre for Peace and Justice.