

Gardens NOT Battlefields



"When a soldier or civilian is killed, twenty years or more of the fruits of one woman's labour is destroyed. The woman will never be able to enjoy seeing her children achieve their full potential. This will be not by accident, but willfully, because someone, somewhere, who could not appreciate the value of human life, issued an order"
([Feminism and Nonviolence Study Group, 1983](#)).

"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter" ([Martin L. King Jr.](#))

Greetings Jason Kearney (Lieutenant-Colonel / Commanding Officer) and James Shouldice (Chief Warrant Officer / Regimental Sergeant Major),

As concerned citizens we are extremely disturbed by the fact that global military spending has hit a new record high of \$2.4 trillion. A global snapshot shows that the biggest military spenders include the United States (\$916B), China (\$296B), Russia (\$109B) and India (\$83.6B) ([Psaropoulos 2024](#)). With respect to Canadian militarism, the Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, announced in April 2024 new investments of \$8.1B over five years and \$73B over the next 20 years ([Prime Minister 2024](#)). Given that there exists "plentiful evidence that the effects of military coercion are highly unpredictable, and that physical violence proves no more reliable a strategy than nonviolent political methods, even in the case of direct confrontations with other violent actors" (Cockburn 2012: 259), such spending is **irrational**.

Similarly, nonviolent community leaders pointed out decades ago that "Wars are poor chisels for carving out peaceful tomorrows" ([Martin L. King Jr.](#)). In addition to the irrationality of military spending, we maintain that war is **inherently immoral** and should be abolished as a means of resolving conflict. According to the [Imperial War Museums](#) (2025), "It has been estimated that 187 million people died as a result of war from 1900 to the present. The actual number is likely far higher." *How many more lives will be lost before we realize organized violence is not an inevitability; but rather, a choice* (Cockburn 2012)? Alongside the needless loss of life, the [Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs](#) (2023) reports that countless people have either died or fallen terribly ill because of war and its relentless destruction of hospitals, infrastructure and the environment. According to the [Institute](#), an incalculable number of people have sustained injuries, illnesses, disabilities and displacement due to the incontestable horrors of war.

As a small yet significant step towards achieving global peace we are writing you because we believe deep within our conscience that transforming institutions of belligerence such as armouries and military bases into nonviolent institutions is a necessity on the path towards *true* peace. It is alarming and disheartening to know that the sole purpose of 66 Birmingham St. is "Direct Fire Support," which translates into the training and use of technologies that result in extreme suffering and death among our brothers and sisters around the world. Weapons such as, Browning Hi-Power Pistol, C7A2 Automatic

Rifle, Remington 870P Shotgun, C9A2 Light Machine Gun (LMG), M72A5-C1 Short Range Anti-Armour Weapon (Light) (SRAAW(L)), C13 Fragmentation Grenade, C6A1 FLEX General Purpose Machine Gun (GPMG), Carl Gustaf M1 Short Range Anti-Armour Weapon (Medium) (SRAAW(M)), Browning M2 Heavy Machine Gun (HMG), C16 Automatic Grenade Launcher System (AGLS), BGM-71 Tube-Launched Optically-Tracked Wire-Guided (TOW) Anti-Tank Guided Missile (ATGM) will only spread more pain and misery across our globe. As concerned citizens we echo our brother Martin L. King Jr.'s insight that "We must pursue peaceful end through peaceful means." As a step in this direction, we would like to book a meeting with you in order to discuss the following possibilities:

1. Transformation of Captain B.S. Hutcheson V.C. Armoury located at 66 Birmingham St., Etobicoke, into a community garden and greenhouse for the residents of Toronto.

-According to [Raveendra](#), "In 2022, some 117,890 children in the city were living in poverty." As the child poverty capital of Canada ([Raveendra 2024](#)), we maintain that transforming Captain B.S. Hutcheson V.C. Armoury into a community garden will assist in the process of alleviating child poverty.

-According to the [Daily Bread Food Bank](#), "In 2022-23, there were over 2.5 million client visits [...]." We maintain that transforming Captain B.S. Hutcheson V.C. Armoury into a community garden will assist in the process of alleviating hunger throughout the city.

-According to the [Daily Bread Food Bank](#), "In 2022-23, Daily Bread delivered nearly 28 pounds of food. This is a 50% increase compared to the previous year." We maintain that transforming Captain B.S. Hutcheson V.C. Armoury into a community garden will enable us to make significant donations of healthy fruits and vegetables to Daily Bread.

-According to the [National Observer](#) (2023), "Fruit and vegetable prices are killing us." We maintain that transforming Captain B.S. Hutcheson V.C. Armoury into a community garden will assist families in the process gaining accessibility to healthy fruits and vegetables, which research shows is beneficial for fending off life-threatening chronic illnesses such as cardiovascular diseases and Type-2 diabetes ([National Observer](#)).

-According to [Shelter Logic Direct](#) (n.d.), greenhouses contain five major benefits: (1) extended growing seasons, (2) effective pest prevention (3) customizable, (4) additional growing options and (5) weather protection for all plants. We maintain that transforming Captain B.S. Hutcheson V.C. Armoury into a large greenhouse will enable the community to grow and eat healthy food all year long.

2. Transformation of Captain B.S. Hutcheson V.C. Armoury website (<https://www.torscotr.com/>) into an accurate source of information (vs. pro-military propaganda) pertaining to the relationship between war, human misery and environmental destruction.

-According to the [Imperial War Museums](#) (2025), "It has been estimated that 187 million people died as a result of war from 1900 to the present. The actual number is likely far higher."

-[Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs](#) (2023) reports that countless people have either **died** or fallen **terribly ill** because of war and its relentless destruction of hospitals, infrastructure and the environment. According to the [Institute](#), an incalculable number of people have sustained **injuries, illnesses, disabilities** and **displacement** due to the incontestable horrors of war.

-According to the [Conflict and Environment Observatory](#) (2020), "Military training creates **emissions, disruption to landscapes** and **terrestrial and marine habitats**, and creates **chemical** and **noise pollution** from the use of weapons, aircraft and vehicles."

-According to the [Conflict and Environmental Observatory](#) (2020), "Indirectly, high levels of military spending divert resources away from solving **environmental problems** and away from sustainable development."

-According to the [Surgeon General Report](#) (2024), "For the 2018-2022 period, and for the 2015-2019 and 2020-2022 periods, the **suicide** rate was higher with statistical significance among Regular Force males who were **separated, divorced** or **widowed** when compared to other marital status categories."

-According to the [Surgeon General Report](#) (2024), "The rate of **suicide** was higher with statistical significance among males who were in the Army combat arms occupation, relative to those in other occupations."

-According to [Dr. Susan L. Ray](#), "The veterans in this study became homeless many years after their release from the military. **Alcoholism**, other **drug addition** and **mental health** problems were some of the major issues identified by the participants that lead ultimately to **homelessness** [...]. Alcohol and/or other drugs were used to cope with many problems that occurred while transitioning to civilian life. The difficulty in transitioning to civilian life was one of the major findings that emerged from this study."

-According to [The Guardian](#) (2024), "For years, the country's armed forces has publicly acknowledged a culture that bred **abuse** and **assault**, and a longstanding failure to root it out. The crisis, which promoted a shake-up at the most senior ranks, has eroded public trust in the institution and weakened morale within the military's ranks."

-According to [CMAJ OPEN](#) (2017), "Canadian military women are at increased risk for **sexual assault** and military-related **sexual assault** relative to their male counterparts. Deployments may be a period of elevated risk for military-related **sexual assault**, and women who reported military related **sexual assault** are more likely to have experienced **mental disorders**, especially **post-traumatic stress disorder**."

-According to the BBC (2021), "Women in the military are almost twice as likely as the general population to have been victims of **sexual assault** in the previous year, and nearly 80% of all respondents witnessed or experienced '**inappropriate sexualized behaviour**.'"

-According to [Statistics Canada](#) (2022 study), "Among Veterans with a **disability**, 72% had **pain-related disability**, 66% had a **physical disability** and 51% had a **sensory disability**. Additionally, 23% of Veterans had a **mental health-related disability** and 29% had a **cognitive disability**."

-According to [CBC News](#) (2011), “**Domestic violence** on Canadian military bases has climbed steadily in recent years, coinciding with the return of soldiers who carry physical and psychological battle wounds home.”

3. Transformation of military hardware (e.g., metal components) into socially useful tools.

-Collect ALL weapons that you train people to kill and destroy with, including, Browning Hi-Power Pistol, C7A2 Automatic Rifle, Remington 870P Shotgun, C9A2 Light Machine Gun (LMG), M72A5-C1 Short Range Anti-Armour Weapon (Light) (SRAAW(L)), C13 Fragmentation Grenade, C6A1 FLEX General Purpose Machine Gun (GPMG), Carl Gustaf M1 Short Range Anti-Armour Weapon (Medium) (SRAAW(M)), Browning M2 Heavy Machine Gun (HMG), C16 Automatic Grenade Launcher System (AGLS), BGM-71 Tube-Launched Optically-Tracked Wire-Guided (TOW) Anti-Tank Guided Missile (ATGM), melt them down and reuse for the construction of homes.

-According to the [New York Times](#) (2018), “For years, firearms at these so-called **gun melts** have served as an **inexpensive supply of scrap metal** that can be turned into bars of high-grade steel and later used as components in [...] **construction** and **energy projects**.”

4. Transformation of ALL military labourers into non-military labourers.

-Opportunity to transform ALL military labourers into non-military labourers such as [Christian Peace Makers](#) (CPT). Accordingly, “CPT places teams at the invitation of local peacemaking communities that are confronting situations of lethal conflict. These teams support and amplify the voices of local peacemakers who risk injury and death by waging nonviolent direct action to confront systems of violence and oppression.” In addition, “CPT enlists spiritual communities and individuals in an organized, nonviolent alternative to war.” *Don’t wait, you can join the alternative and start training today!*

Please note: Sunday, February 23, 2025, would be an ideal day for a dialogue as we will be in the neighbourhood as part of the [Global Day of Action to #CLOSEBASES](#). Please let us know if you will be free on this day to discuss the contents of this letter. If this day does not work for you please reach out to us so we can coordinate another day.

Sincerely,

Jozef Konyari

Seek The Alternatives (STA) – Nonviolent Grassroots Community Organization

Contact information: 647-381-9812

Supporting Organizations

Counselling 2 Wellness, Etobicoke Ont.

“The chain reaction of evil – wars producing more war – must be broken, or we shall be plunged into the darkness abyss of annihilation.” (Martin L. King Jr.)

References

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