

May 30, 2003

Dear Prime Minister and Members of the Cabinet:

I am writing to express concern regarding the Canadian Government's intention to explore possible cooperation with the United States' plan to deploy a North American ballistic missile defence (BMD) system.

Canadian churches have long engaged the Canadian government on weapons deployment systems since these decisions are profoundly moral in nature, and are evidence of the long-term values we hold. As churches, we offer the following values to consider in your decision-making:

- **War Prevention and Peacebuilding** – Cultivate the development of peaceful means of resolving disputes and continue to promote human security, as the well-being of peoples, for all. We are mandated by God to make peace and shun war.
- **Disarmament** – Insist on strict limits on the use of force. We reiterate here, as we often have in the past, that nuclear weapons are an abomination and contrary to the will of God.
- **Stewardship** – Honour creation – including space – as an abundant source of life and bounty and the common heritage of all humanity forever, free from weapons.
- **Accountable Public Institutions** – The Canadian government, with its responsibility for protection of these values, must retain its own capacity to independently assess, verify and act on perceived threats.

In the light of these values, we write to seek your assurances that the Canadian government will set out the conditions and security requirements that will have to be met before Canada can give material or political support to ballistic missile defence. In particular, we would appreciate your response to the following questions:

1. Will Canada seek an unqualified commitment from the US that ballistic missile defences will not involve basing or testing any weapons in space and will not break the global norm, or violate long-standing Canadian policy against the placement of weapons in space?
2. Will Canada be prepared to introduce into the BMD discussions a clear request that the United States government agree to talks in Geneva at the Conference on Disarmament leading to a space weapons ban, before proceeding further with BMD deployment?
3. Will Canada take advantage of these discussions to seek clarification and disavowal of those elements of the US national security strategy and nuclear doctrine that assert a right to retain the option to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states?

4. Will Canada call on the United States to elaborate the ways in which it intends to work with the international community to prevent the proliferation of ballistic missiles?

5. Finally, will Canada be open to discussing alternative defence cooperation arrangements where NORAD resumes its primary bilateral function, namely cooperation and coordination of air defence?

The attached brief by Project Ploughshares, an ecumenical agency of the Council of Churches specializing in peacebuilding and disarmament, elaborates on the context of each these questions, and we would be pleased if you would take the issues raised into consideration in your response.

We know that the safety and well-being of the people of Canada and indeed, the world cannot be found within a technological fortress. The Canadian Council of Churches believe, as Canada's own policy declares, that the only real protection from nuclear weapons is their abolition and permanent prohibition, and we fear, with many others, that the pursuit of BMD will undermine – as it already has – existing arms control agreements, and will set back disarmament efforts as other states retain or expand their arsenals in an effort to overcome the perceived advantages of BMD.

We look forward to continuing this dialogue with you, and await your response.

Be assured of our prayers for you in these momentous times, may God's own wisdom light your path.

**Prof. Richard Schneider**

**President**

**Canadian Council of Churches**

*Live under the protection of God Most High and stay in the shadow of God All-Powerful. Then you will say to the Lord, "You are my fortress, my place of safety; you are my God, and I trust you." (Psalm 91:1-2)*

*"... they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4)*

**Canada and US Deployment of a Ballistic Missile Defence System:  
Questions for the Federal Cabinet  
May 28, 2003**

Foreign Minister Bill Graham has recently stated that “the best way to ensure that Canadian interests are being served is to remain engaged in dialogue with the United States on all issues of our shared continental security” (House of Commons, May 15). The real value of such a dialogue must be measured by the extent to which Canadian security concerns are heard and respected by our dialogue partner.

Canada’s dialogue with Washington should clearly set out the conditions and security requirements that will have to be met before Canada can give any material or political support to ballistic missile defence. The appeal of BMD is obvious. What responsible government would not want to shield its people from attack by nuclear-armed missiles if such protection was available? The responsibility to protect is a paramount function of government, but it unfortunately does not follow that every plan undertaken in the name of protection will actually make people safer and more secure.

The following questions and issues, therefore, should be central to Canada-US discussions on BMD.

**1. Will Canada seek an unqualified commitment from the US that ballistic missile defences will not involve basing or testing any weapons in space and will not break the global norm, or violate Canadian policy, against the placement of weapons in space?**

The weaponization of space is not simply a vague future possibility; it is a currently declared and explicit US intention to place weapons in space. In April 2003 the Missile Defence Agency (MDA) reported that its pursuit of boost-phase interceptors would initially focus on land- and sea-based interceptors, but that “eventually” interceptors would be deployed on “satellites in low earth orbit.” The report said the MDA would begin developing a space-based kinetic energy interceptor in FY04. Furthermore, its 2004/5 budget projects the deployment of a weapons test bed in space by 2008 “with initial, on-orbit testing to commence with three to five satellites” in 2008/9.

**2. Will Canada be prepared to introduce into the BMD discussions a clear request that the United States government agree to talks in Geneva at the Conference on Disarmament leading to a space weapons ban, before proceeding further with BMD deployment?**

The Conference on Disarmament (CD) is the primary UN disarmament negotiating body, but talks on a space weapons ban have been stalled in recent years due to an ongoing agenda dispute that the United States could end by simply agreeing to good faith negotiations on “preventing an arms race in outer space.” While the CD is not the only, nor the most effective, venue for such negotiations, any agreement by Canada to support BMD without a corresponding American commitment to negotiating a space weapons ban would represent an abandonment of Canada’s historic commitment to space as a weapons-free zone.

**3. Will Canada take advantage of the Canada-US BMD discussions to seek clarification and disavowal of those elements of the US national security strategy and nuclear doctrine that assert a right to retain the option to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states?**

The United States continues to explore new generations of nuclear weapons, notably low-yield battlefield weapons designed for use against targets in non-nuclear states (e.g., the so-called bunker buster bombs). The result is to make their own acquisition of a nuclear deterrent all the more attractive to countries in a state of enduring conflict with the United States. Canada could remind the United States that a simple way to dispel much of this proliferation pressure would be for it to disavow the pursuit of new weapons by ratifying the test ban treaty and by an unambiguous reiteration of the “negative security assurances” mandated by the Security Council in 1995 by which nuclear weapon states declare they will not use nor threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states.

**4. Will Canada call on the United States to elaborate the ways in which it intends to work with the international community to prevent the proliferation of ballistic missiles, especially since the BMD system planned by the US only has a chance of being successful if the missile threat is kept to a minimum?**

One of the ironies of the ballistic missile defence is that it only has a real chance of being effective if disarmament diplomacy successfully keeps the threat to minimum. Even the United States acknowledges that BMD’s capacity will be limited to intercepting a very small number of attacking missiles – and even then, no system can guarantee 100 percent success. It follows, therefore, that arms control and disarmament are key to controlling the ballistic missile threat, and thus are key to the success of BMD itself. If the ballistic missile threat is not severely limited, any BMD system will be easily overwhelmed. The United States and Canada therefore have a shared interest in effective non-proliferation diplomacy – and if it is successful enough to make BMD feasible, Canada might suggest to the US that rather than spend hundreds of

billions of dollars on a minimal threat, those resources might be better spent on additional disarmament and non-proliferation efforts.

**5. Finally, will Canada be open to discussing alternative defence cooperation arrangements where NORAD resumes its primary bilateral function, namely cooperation and coordination of air defence?**

The primary cooperative bilateral defence activity that NORAD facilitates is air defence. NORAD also tracks missile launches, but that is part of a national US role linked to its nuclear deterrent. Air defence, however, is a bilateral operation. In the post-Cold War era that cooperative operation is only minimally concerned with traditional territorial defence matters – instead the focus is on things like drug interdiction and other illegal entries into North America, which is much more central to current security concerns and hence to the work that NORAD actually does.

**Project Ploughshares, May 2003**