



JUNE
2019

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**We need your
ongoing financial
support**

Our office will be open during the summer as our planning work continues on upcoming Fall activities such as a conference. Our expenses continue also. If you haven't yet made your 2019 donation, please consider doing so soon.



The woods are lovely, dark, and deep
But I have promises to keep
And miles to go before I sleep
And miles to go before I sleep

Robert Frost, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" from *The Poetry of Robert Frost*

June 12, 2019
Ploughshares Calgary Society
Annual General Meeting
7:00 p.m.
Parkdale United Church
2919 – 8th Ave. N.W., Calgary

The Ploughshares Calgary Society's Annual General Meeting (AGM) takes place on June 12th, at 7:00 p.m., followed by the Very Rev. Bill Phipps' talk on *Expressions of Peace in Dangerous Times*. Bill Phipps is a former Moderator of the United Church of Canada and is passionate about social justice, right relations with our Indigenous brothers and sisters, and action to address climate change. He has worked as a minister, lawyer, community organizer, hospital chaplain and adult educator. Please join us for an insightful and thought-provoking talk. The AGM and talk will be held in the conference room at Parkdale United Church. All are welcome; please join us.



- ❖ **"Christians are overwhelmingly the most targeted religious group in the world"** by Charles Collins, May 3, 2019, in CRUX. An interim report commissioned by the UK foreign secretary indicated that persecutions of Christians are severe and widely spread geographically. This is characterized by the removal of crosses, the destruction of church buildings and other symbols, and the killings and abductions of clergy. In some contexts, it reaches the level of genocide. The elimination of Christianity is the explicit object of extremist groups in Syria, Iraq, Egypt, north-east Nigeria, and the Philippines. See [UK government panel warns of 'genocidal' persecution against Christians.](#)
- ❖ **Murray Thomson, longtime peace activist and co-founder of Project Ploughshares, passed away on May 2, 2019.** During his lifetime, Murray Thomson was a passionate advocate for peace and social justice and made numerous contributions to international development and nuclear disarmament. His tireless efforts for peace and disarmament were recognized with many awards, such as the Pearson Peace Medal and the Order of Canada. This article on Ceasefire.ca is a fitting tribute to Murray Thomson's work and his playful sense of humour. See [Murray Thomson.](#)
- ❖ **Jean Vanier, internationally recognized and distinguished Canadian Catholic philosopher, theologian, and humanitarian passed away on May 7, 2019.** Vanier's five decades of living with deeply vulnerable people led him to an understanding of weakness and common humanity. Among his many other awards, Vanier received the [Templeton Prize in 2015](#) for his work in affirming life's spiritual dimension, his establishment of L'Arche communities on behalf of the intellectually challenged, and his other peace efforts. For information about Vanier, see [About Jean Vanier.](#) This Globe and Mail article by Alex Crétey Systemans also provides some deep insights into how Vanier's life and work represented a path to peace. See [Jean Vanier.](#)
- ❖ **Risk of nuclear war is highest since WWII.** In this May 21, 2019, article, Tom Miles, a Reuters journalist, points to the warning by a senior U.N. security expert that the risk of nuclear weapons being used is at its highest since World War Two, and that this is an urgent issue that the world needs to take more seriously. See [Risk of nuclear war now highest.](#)
- ❖ **"One Million Species at Risk of Extinction – Threatening Human Communities Around the World, UN Report Warns."** This May 21, 2019, article by Maddie Burakoff outlines how a global assessment compiled by hundreds of scientists found that humans are inflicting staggering damage on the world's biodiversity. See [One Million Species at Risk of Extinction.](#)
- ❖ **Can U.S. and Iran avoid next 'forever war'? New threats and a possible path to peace.** In this May 20, 2019, article in Newsweek, Tom Donnelly discusses the rhetorical salvos that have been flying back and forth between the U.S. and Iran and what the future holds. [See Can U.S. and Iran avoid next 'forever war'?](#)

This article from *The Hill Times* is offered free-of-charge to the Calgary Ploughshares Society. The publishers of *The Hill Times* are also offering a 50 per cent discount on a *Hill Times* annual subscription to members of the Calgary Ploughshares Society who wish to have full-time access to [The Hill Times](#) news, comments, and complete archives by contacting Dan at circulation@hilltimes.com

Nuclear disarmament talks like Groundhog Day, but more tragedy than comedy

By DOUGLAS ROCHE

The U.S. has plans to spend \$100,000 per minute on the maintenance and expansion of nuclear weapons.



Syed Hasrin Syed Hussin, chair of the Third Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) Review Conference, briefs reporters at the closing of the meeting on May 10 at the United Nations in New York. The NPT is the most important arms control and disarmament agreement, says former Senator Douglas Roche. *United Nations photograph by Evan Schneider*

NEW YORK—When I sat through the speeches at the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) meeting at the United Nations earlier this month, I felt I was watching, again, the *Groundhog Day* movie—you know, the one where the weather forecaster is doomed to repeatedly relive the same day. The film was so popular, the term “Groundhog Day” is now used to describe a recurring situation in government and military arenas. It’s supposed to be funny.

These NPT meetings, however, are not a comedy. They sometimes dissolve into farce. But they are increasingly tragic.

The NPT is the most important arms control and disarmament agreement. Now, on the eve of its 50th anniversary, it comprises 191 states that have [agreed to](#) “pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date.” I was there in 1995 when the treaty was indefinitely extended, with all states promising “systematic and progressive efforts” to reduce nuclear arms, an effective test ban on nuclear weapons, and negotiations to ban the production of fissile material. None of that has been achieved in the last quarter-century.

But they keep talking at their meetings, which can best be characterized as a ritualistic facade. In fact, the speeches are now, to borrow a phrase from my colleague Paul Meyer, also a former Canadian Ambassador for Disarmament, “sterile discourse.”

In 2000, the high-water mark for the NPT, the parties unanimously made an “unequivocal undertaking” to the elimination of nuclear weapons and backed this up with a 13-point action plan. The next year, George W. Bush entered the White House and pulled the United States away from two of the plan’s pillars: a Comprehensive Nuclear Treaty Ban, and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which was designed to stop the building of missile defences on the grounds that they merely spur a renewed nuclear arms race.

The viability of the NPT has been in trouble ever since, especially since the U.S. maintains a fleet of nuclear weapons in five NATO countries, a violation of the treaty, and a promised conference to discuss the possibilities of making the Middle East a zone free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction has never been held, thanks to the [blockage](#) of the U.S. and Israel.

Instead of leading the pursuit of comprehensive negotiations to eliminate the [13,850 nuclear weapons held by nine states](#), the U.S. is roaring ahead with a modernization plan to spend [\\$100,000 per minute on nuclear weapons](#). Perhaps, in the spirit of Groundhog Day, I should repeat that: the U.S. has plans to spend \$100,000 per minute on the maintenance and expansion of nuclear weapons. Russia, China, India, and Pakistan are also spending on nuclear weapons, but their sums, combined, are much less than the U.S. spends. The U.S. could spend \$1.2-trillion over the next 30 years rebuilding its nuclear arsenals.

Moreover, when a group of non-nuclear weapons states created, in 2017, the [Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons](#), the U.S. expressly warned its NATO partners not to sign on. At the NPT meeting, the U.S., apparently seriously, said that, because of the deterioration of international relations, the world will have to await the return of “[favourable conditions](#)” before starting a “new disarmament discourse.” Hypocrisy knows no bounds at the NPT.

Canada tried to take the high road in New York. In Canada’s opening speech, Cindy Termorshuizen, director of international security at Global Affairs Canada, [appealed for](#) a “spirit of compromise” to maintain the NPT as a “noble and good cause” in making a better world. She warned that the deteriorating international security environment risked igniting a global nuclear arms race. She called on Russia to return to compliance with the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and for both the U.S, and Russia to ensure the START Treaty, due to expire in 2021, is renewed.

Canada’s second speech remarkably led off by quoting from the 1955 Russell-Einstein manifesto, in which the two philosophical and scientific giants, Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein, set out the basis for the Pugwash peace movement: “We have to learn to think in a new way. We have to learn to ask ourselves, not what steps can be taken to give military victory to whatever group we prefer, for there no longer are such steps; the question we have to ask ourselves is: what steps can be taken to prevent a military contest of which the issue must be disastrous to all parties?”

This appeal to the higher angels was a refreshing moment at the UN. Sadly, the demons soon reappeared. The meeting ended on what has become the normal strangulation of the NPT: no substantive agreement on the way forward to the 2020 review conference. The [Doomsday Clock](#) of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists says the danger of nuclear war is at two minutes to midnight. But the institutional groundhog prevails.

Former Independent Senator Douglas Roche is a former Canadian ambassador for disarmament and author of Hope Not Fear: Building Peace in a Fractured World.

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Experiences in peacebuilding with the UN, donor governments, and NGOs

By Kathleen McWilliams



During Ploughshares Calgary Society's monthly educational meeting on May 8, 2019, Cheyanne Scharbatke-Church presented on her many and varied experiences in working on peacebuilding and program evaluation work for diverse organizations such as the United Nations and CARE. Scharbatke-Church is an authority on adaptive program design and evaluations in peacebuilding, anti-corruption efforts and governance, and a professor of practice at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy (Tufts University). She is also the founder of Besa, a boutique firm specializing in evaluation, performance measurement systems, learning processes, program design, strategic planning, and assessments for social change organizations; clients include the U.N. Peacebuilding Fund, the U.S. State Department, CARE, and the Canadian government.

One of her past experiences included working at the UN Institute on Peace and Conflict, based in Northern Ireland. Scharbatke-Church moved to Northern Ireland the year after the Good Friday Agreement, which was reached on Good Friday, April 10, 1998. This is a peace agreement between the British and Irish governments, and most of the political parties in Northern Ireland stating how Northern Ireland should be governed. Scharbatke-Church worked with both the Catholic (i.e., the Irish Republican) and Protestant (i.e., the British Unionist) sides of the conflict, where her work focused on shifting senior leadership on both sides from violence to peace. She described her time in working with paramilitaries on both sides there as a "transformational experience."

Scharbatke-Church also emphasized the need to search for common ground when undertaking peacebuilding work and the need for organizations involved in peacebuilding to have accountability for their work (i.e., "Did we do what we said we would?"; "Did we do it well?"; and "Did it make a difference—did it have results?"). To be accountable, organizations also have to make these promises to someone, which should be to the populations they are working with. One area that is often missed in humanitarian and peacebuilding work, however, is this measurement of results, including determining what did not work so well. Just as importantly, she pointed out that violence in many cases arises from people having no hope of a better life because all jobs are held by the elites, or having no hope because of a lack of access to education. So, when one has no hope, violence becomes the answer.

In 2007, Scharbatke-Church took on the role of professor of practice in human security at Tufts University where she teaches classes on evaluation and corruption at the Fletcher School. She stated her belief that before development work can be successful, funds must first be spent on stopping war. She also noted that it is impossible to do work with any peacebuilding if corruption is not dealt with; however, no bilateral donors want to deal with corruption. In closing, Scharbatke-Church suggested the audience read *Factfulness: Ten Reasons We're Wrong About the World – and Why Things Are Better* by Hans Rosling, who stated before he passed away in February, 2017, that, "This book is my last battle in my life-long mission to fight devastating ignorance."

More upcoming events

Webinar: Power and collective resistance

Date & Time: June 18, 2019, 12:00 pm

Description:

Is it inevitable that those in power will remain there? Dr. Liza Lorenzetti from the University of Calgary looks at how conceptions of established dominance have been perpetuated in our society and explores how social movements are challenging the status quo. [Click here to register to join the webinar](#) and learn more about how citizens are propelling change with greater effect than ever before — through frameworks such as equity movements, prevention of gender-based violence and racism, and Truth and Reconciliation.

Speaker:

Dr. Liza Lorenzetti, PhD, is an assistant professor in UCalgary's Faculty of Social Work. Her teaching, research, and community practice center on anti-oppression, peace-building and social justice.



Webinar: Elections in the digital age

Democratic electoral systems around the world are facing even greater threats of interference enabled by digital technologies that can be used to mislead voters in powerful ways. In this webinar, UCalgary experts examine how collection of voter data, micro-targeting, artificial intelligence and deepfake technologies are being used to influence election outcomes, as well as possible regulatory solutions for safeguarding Canada's electoral system in the future.

Elections in the digital age – Date & Time: June 26, 2019, 12 to 1 p.m. MT - Online

[REGISTER NOW](#)

About the speakers

Dr. Lisa Young, PhD, is a political science professor in UCalgary's Faculty of Arts, and former dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Her research focuses on political parties, election finances and women's participation in political life.

Dr. Hadi Hemmati, PhD, is an assistant professor in UCalgary's Schulich School of Engineering. His research areas are in software engineering and data science.

We are very grateful for your loyal moral and financial support over the years that has allowed us to continue working for and educating about peace. Please consider donating for 2019 soon if you haven't already done so. If you have already sent in your donation for 2019, we thank you. Please make your cheque payable to Ploughshares Calgary Society. If you write the cheque to the name of Project Ploughshares, the bank *will not* honour it for us, so please write it to Ploughshares Calgary Society. Thank you.

Yes, I am interested in supporting the peace work of the Ploughshares Calgary Society. I'd like to make a donation in the following amount:

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