

PRESS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Women's peace groups denounce the Carney government's Defence Industrial Strategy as a threat to women, the climate, and peace

(Vancouver) – The Canadian Voice of Women for Peace (VOW) and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)-Canada have released an open letter to Prime Minister Carney and Defence Minister McGuinty to denounce the federal government's first Defence Industrial Strategy (DIS) and call for its cancellation.

VOW and WILPF-Canada are concerned that the DIS will expedite the procurement of weapons and the doubling of arms exports, which will cause harm to women and worsen climate change. They claim that the DIS is an irresponsible and reckless plan that will militarize the Canadian economy and risk more violence and war.

Under the DIS, the federal government will spend \$180 billion for procurement of new weapons systems and \$290 billion in defence-related capital investment and infrastructure in the next ten years, which is a combined \$470 billion to support the military. VOW and WILPF-Canada argue that spending tax dollars on the military is a trade-off to federal spending on health care, housing, child care, and education.

Tamara Lorincz, VOW's senior researcher, stated that "The research shows that it is mostly men who benefit from higher military spending and investment in the defence sector." She explained that the federal government's gender analysis of the budget, *Canada Strong*, showed that military spending disproportionately advantages men.

Lorincz also challenged the DIS's claims that it will create "125,000 high-paying careers" as a boon to workers in Canada. She argued that vast majority of those jobs will go to men as referenced in the 2024 report, *State of Canada's Defence Industry*, which was prepared by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) and the Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries (CADSI). The ISED-CADSI report revealed that women comprise only 27% of the defence industry. Lorincz argued, "it will be predominantly men who will get these well-paying jobs to manufacture more weapons for the male-dominated military to wage war." She added that more jobs could be created in the care economy providing programs and services that would be productive and help more Canadians.

VOW and WILPF-Canada also argue that the 58-page DIS ignores the adverse social and environmental impacts from defence procurement. There is no gender-based analysis or environmental impact statement included in the DIS. As well, arms control, disarmament, non-proliferation and peace are absent from the strategy.

Ellen Woodsworth, cochair of WILPF-Canada questioned, "Why is so much money going to the military while more Canadians are desperate and living in poverty and struggling to make ends meet, especially single-mothers and elderly women?" Woodsworth also explained that the DIS's focus on weapons procurement and production undermines Canada's commitment to the United Nations's Charter and Security Council Resolution 1325 on *Women, Peace and Security*. She added "The federal government still has not fully implemented the recommendations of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission and National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which requires substantial federal funding."

VOW and WILPF-Canada highlighted the key finding of the UN Secretary General's annual report on *Women Peace and Security* that stated "Women peacebuilders' universal message to governments and armed actors is unequivocal: **end the wars, respect international law and disarm.**" The women's group contend that the Canadian government is doing the exact opposite and ignoring the UN recommendations and the voices of women and wasting public resources on re-armament and the military.

The women's groups also worry that the DIS will prevent Canada from achieving the Paris Agreement and rapidly reduce emissions because the military is the largest consumer of fossil fuel in the federal government and weapons systems are carbon-intensive. New fighter jets, armed drones, warships, armoured vehicles and missile launchers consume excessive petroleum and cause carbon lock-in for many years. According to the UN's recent report, *The Security We Need: Rebalancing Military Spending for a Sustainable and Peaceful Future*, "Military expenditure harms the planet because it is emissions-intensive. Each dollar allocated to the military generates more than twice the greenhouse gas emissions of a dollar spent elsewhere."

For WILPF-Canada and VOW, the DIS will create an American-style, market-driven military-industrial complex with little oversight that will enrich defence contractors and investors, but will impoverish Canadians and exacerbate the climate crisis. They are calling for the cancellation of the DIS and for the federal government to release a strategy for a green, care economy and a white paper on arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

They have released an open letter to Prime Minister Carney and Defence Minister McGuinty to cancel the DIS, which is published at wilpfcanada.ca

WILPF-Canada and VOW with other peace and anti-war groups including the Ottawa Peace Council and the Canadian Peace Congress are having a public panel event "Holding the Bully's Coat: Canada, NATO and Trump's U.S. Empire" on Tuesday, March 3 from 7:30-9:00 p.m. at the McNabb Community Centre, 180 Percy St, Ottawa. They are also having a rally "Hell No to NATO's 5%! Cut Military Spending and Fund a Green, Care Economy" outside the Chateau Laurier hotel during the CDA Institute's "The Road to 5%" conference on Wednesday, March 4 from 12:00-1:00 p.m. at 1 Rideau Street in Ottawa.

For more information or for interviews, please contact:

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Canadian Voice of Women for Peace (VOW) is the largest national feminist peace organization with members and chapters across the country. VOW was established in 1960 and is a non-partisan, non-governmental organization comprised of a network of diverse women. VOW's main office is in Toronto. VOW runs many campaigns and education programs related to women, peace, disarmament, and anti-militarism. VOW has consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and every year brings a delegation of Canadian women to the UN Commission on the Status of Women conference. For over 60 years, VOW has tirelessly advocated for a world without war. VOW stands for a feminist peace based on nonviolence, disarmament, diplomacy and common security with gender equality.

Web site: <http://vowpeace.org>

Women's International League for Peace & Freedom (WILPF) Canada is a membership-led organization committed to a feminist peace, social justice, and gender equality. We are a non-partisan, non-governmental organization members across the country. We are the national section of WILPF International, which is the world's longest standing women peace organization founded in 1915, with 32 Sections and 13 Groups across Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. Two of our leaders, Jane Addams and Emily Greene Balch, won the Nobel Peace Prize. WILPF International is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland and has a disarmament program called *Reaching Critical Will* in New York. Our *Peace Women* program monitors the United Nations' Women, Peace & Security agenda and we have an international *Environment Working Group*.

Web site: wilpfcanda.ca

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