

**CONSCIENCE AND PEACE TAX INTERNATIONAL (CPTI)**  
**Submission to the 90th Session of the Committee on the**  
**Rights of the Child**  
**CANADA**

**(Juvenile recruitment and militarisation in schools)**

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**Basic Information**

**POPULATION (November 2021, estimated**

): 37,943,000

Males annually reaching recruitment age (approximate)

: 102,446

MILITARY RECRUITMENT: Voluntary since 1946.

MINIMUM AGE

: 16 (see text)

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION: Recognised with the introduction of conscription in 1917.

ARMED FORCES: active strength, Nov. 2021:

66,000

compared to the male population annually reaching recruitment age 30.3%

MILITARY EXPENDITURE US \$ equivalent, 2020

\$22,755m

Per capita \$603

As % of GDP 1.4%

In September 2012, the Committee on the Rights of the Child considered the consolidated third and fourth periodic report of Canada under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, having already, in July 2006, considered its initial report under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict. As of that month, Canada was one of only 18 States which continued to permit the legal recruitment of persons aged 16, one of the others, Ireland, having just announced that it was bringing in legislation establishing 18 as the minimum age for all recruitment.

In its concluding observations:

While noting with appreciation oral responses provided by the delegation during the dialogue, the Committee seriously regrets the absence of information to the follow up on implementation of the OPAC pursuant to Article 8(2). The Committee expresses deep concern that despite the recommendation provided in its concluding

observations (CRC/OPAC/CAN/C0/1, para. 9, 2006) to give priority, in the process of voluntary recruitment, to those who are oldest and to consider increasing the age of voluntary recruitment, the State party has not considered measures to this effect.,

and:

reiterates its previous recommendations provided in CRC/OPAC/CAN/C0/1 and recommends to the State party to include their implementation and follow up to OPAC in its next periodic report to the CRC. The Committee further recommends the State Party to consider raising the age of voluntary recruitment to 18, and in the meantime give priority to those who are oldest in the process of voluntary recruitment.

The Committee also expressed

concern that recruitment strategies may in fact actively target Aboriginal youth and are conducted at high school premises

, and recommended

that Aboriginal, or any other children in vulnerable situations are not actively targeted for recruitment and to reconsider conducting these programs at high school premises.

In its latest report, the State Party makes it clear that it has no intention of acting on the Committee

s recommendations:

The minimum age of enlistment in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Regular Force continues to be 17 years old, and it is possible to enlist in certain training programs

and in the Reserve Forces beginning at age 16 with parental consent. These ages of enrolment have been deemed appropriate based on the ages at which Canadian students generally complete secondary school and may be in a position to consider a career or to continue with post-secondary education available through the military. Canadian law prohibits the CAF from deploying a person under the age of 18 years into a theatre of hostilities. Refer to Annex 1 for more information.

Regarding the targeting of indigenous people for recruitment, it makes it clear that this is a deliberate strategy.

Recruiting and retaining under-represented populations within the CAF, including women, Indigenous people, and members of visible minorities is a priority. In recruiting, emphasis is put on ensuring that potential recruits have all the information needed to make fully informed choices prior to enlisting. This includes providing opportunities to certain under-represented groups to discover the work of the CAF without undue commitment. To illustrate, the Aboriginal Leadership Opportunities Year is an educational and leadership experience through the Royal Military College, in which Indigenous youth aged 16 or above who have completed high school can participate in special learning plans and follow pre-university and first year university programs.

#### Suggestions

It is suggested that the Committee reiterate its previous recommendations to Canada; it may choose to suggest that the problem of young people being available for recruitment at an early age is best solved by an extension of the period of compulsory education. As far as incentives to encourage the recruitment of indigenous people and other minorities, these have the result that the decision to enlist may not be completely voluntary, and may be ill-advised.

It is further suggested that Canada be asked to confirm that any training undertaken by recruits, or students attending officer training courses, while under the age of eighteen does not include the use of firearms, and in the event that this is not so, that appropriate changes be recommended.

Source: The Military Balance 2022 (International Institute of Strategic Studies, London), which bases its estimate on

demographic statistics taken from the US Census Bureau

Ibid: - calculated from the quoted proportion of the 2021 population which were males between the ages of 15 and 19.

Source: Child Soldiers International (formerly Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers), Louder than words: an agenda for action to end state use of child soldiers London, September 2012.

Source: The Military Balance 2015,.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), April 2021

Child Soldiers International, Louder than words, London, September 2012, p145

CRC/C/CAN/CO/3-4, 5th October 2012, para 75.

Ibid, para 76.

Ibid, paras 75, 76.

Louder than words, op cit, , specifies Regular Officer Training..

CRC/C/CAN/5-6, 5 March 2020, para 162,

Ibid, para 163.