

**CANADA: Conscience Canada Incorporated (CCI) and Nos impôts pour la paix (NIPP)
2004-2006**

1. Addresses and other info :

CC : 901-70 Mill Street, Toronto, Ontario, M5A 4R1, Tel : 416-203-1402; email : consciencecanada@shaw.ca ; web : <http://www.consciencecanada.ca>

NIPP: 1425, chemin Royal, Saint-Laurent (l'Île-d'Orléans), Québec, G0A 3Z0 ; Tel : 450-831-4631 ; Email : nipp@nipp.ca; web : <http://www.nipp.ca>

2. Report written by Marilyn Hébert and Don Woodside, the former and the current international liaison persons, respectively
email : woodside@mcmaster.ca

3. Organizational Structure

Conscience Canada (CC) is a cross-country, federally incorporated, non-governmental organization (NGO) operating mainly in English and some in French (especially for members in the province of Quebec and New Brunswick), with a board of directors consisting of 6 persons with Bruna Nota as president and Don Woodside as Vice President.

Membership: 170+ members, mailing list of over 600, current depositors in the Peace Tax Trust fund about 20

Nos impôts pour la paix (NIPP) is a French-language only, informal movement, present exclusively in the province of Quebec, with Maryse Azzaria as coordinator of volunteers. Membership: 40 members (- out of a membership list of 100 persons –according to a membership survey in 2005).

4. Finances

CC manages two accounts; a Peace Tax Trust Fund holding the money belonging to Conscience Objectors to Military Taxation (COMTs) who have deposited their military taxes in this fund; and an operating account holding money donated to CC for operations such as ongoing education and advocacy campaigns, including the newsletters, pamphlets, political lobbying, petitions, membership survey, participation in peace conferences, as outlined under 'activities' below. Operating costs are kept low by donation of labour by volunteers working from their homes

Operating costs may at times include the hiring of a person for ad-hoc work on a part-time basis.

In 2006 we have requested and received funding from the Canadian Friends Service Committee (Quakers), the Blumenfeld Peace Fund, and an anonymous donor. These funds have allowed us to hire a consultant to follow up on our political lobbying in Ottawa, to publish various materials, and to begin work on a DVD about CC.

5. War Tax Resistance :

In May 2005, some members of CC and of NIPP chose to redirect their military tax (7.88% of their federal income taxes) to the Peace Tax Trust Fund of CC or of NIPP, where the money is held in trust for the government until it agrees to spend it only for peaceful purposes; some redirect their taxes to other peace initiatives. In 2006, it is hoped that there will be an increase in those re-directing the military portion of their taxes, (this year 8.1% of federal taxes). This hope is based on the distribution in English and in French across Canada of a Peace Tax Return modeled on that of Conscience UK and of the NWTRCC of the USA. (see Outreach below)

It is to be noted that the percentages referred to above were calculated by taking into account that proportion of the federal government expenditures used by the Department of National Defence as reflected in the Public Accounts of Canada. Military-related expenditures in a number of other government departments are not included in this conservative percentage, to simplify both the definition and calculation of 'military expenditure'.

6. Peace Tax Campaign (Lobbying):

Many attempts to get a Conscientious Objection Act passed in the House of Commons have

been made in the last 20 years, most recently being a Private Member's Bill, Bill C-348, which was tabled in June 2006 but which never reached the debate stage in the House.

In February 2005, CC and NIPP (5 CC board members including 2 who are also involved with NIPP and in addition 3 other volunteers from CC) spent a week in Ottawa, meeting with federal politicians representing all parties in Parliament, including Ministers, Senators Members of Parliament, and civil servants. Our goal was to establish support for peace tax legislation, namely the adoption of Bill C-348, "An Act respecting conscientious objection to the use of taxes for military purposes", also known as the Conscientious Objection Act. Board members also discussed the long-term vision for CC.

Inspired by the follow-up folder used by Marian Franz in Washington, D.C. in conjunction with the National Campaign for a Peace Tax Fund, CC and NIPP prepared a folder with bilingual material for all those whom we met during the lobbying campaign. One-pagers requested by parliamentarians on the history of CO in Canada and on worldwide peace tax campaigns were later prepared and forwarded, and posted on the CC website.

Several Members of Parliament suggested that we revise the bill to reflect positive alternatives to military expenditures before reintroducing a bill in the House. A board member with a legal background set to work modifying the previous Conscientious Objection Act so that it would reflect the shift in orientation. Only two minor changes were: section 7 was changed to require that the percentage representing military taxation be used for any non-military and non-violent alternatives promoting peace and security, and subsection 10 d) requesting a statement from the Minister of National Revenue certifying this use. A one-pager on these modifications has also been prepared. The previous version of The Conscientious Objection Act which was tabled in early 2006 did not reflect the amended text, and the revised version will be re-introduced in Parliament as soon as possible.

In March 2006, CC hired a consultant who is following up the CC lobby meetings of February 2005 with Members of Parliament and public servants, to ensure that the proposed re-wording of the bill is legally acceptable, to table the new version of the bill in the House of Commons, and hopefully to finally obtain recognition of the proposed peace tax legislation.

During our lengthy discussions in Ottawa in lobby week, we decided to recommend that CC more explicitly extend its scope to include not only those who were more traditional conscientious objectors on religious or moral grounds, but also war tax resisters opposed to a particular war, as well as conscientious objectors who despite their objections to war, support some form of military peacekeeping.

7. Activities

Annual General Meetings (AGM): In 2005, CC's AGM was held in Ottawa, following the lobbying effort and with the presence of a member of Parliament. In 2006, CC's AGM was held in Vancouver, following participation in the World Peace Forum 2006. By holding our AGMs in two different locations, members of CC in widely separated parts of the country were able to participate in a meeting to elect board members and consider policy. NIPP held its most recent yearly meeting in February 2006. It was then decided to continue its work with Maryse Azzaria coordinating when the need arises some 30 volunteers (out of an active membership of 40!) in various areas of collaboration: advocacy/education/membership/translation/newsletter

Membership Survey: In 2005, a survey was carried out of all supporters of CC and NIPP, including membership and subscription lists, using a website survey/email response, and extensive telephone follow up. The survey indicated among other things, how many supporters we have, how many are committed COMTs, how many are able and willing to participate in our work and members' preferences regarding CC/NIPP priorities for 2006. Expert analysis of CC survey results including charts were provided by a volunteer. For more details regarding this survey, consult the CC newsletter No. 90 – Spring 2006. An article regarding NIPP's survey can be found in *l'Objecteur*, Numéro 7 – mars 2006.

Participation in an international peace forum in Vancouver by the distribution of leaflets, the Peace Tax Return and CC literature.

8. OUTREACH THROUGH PUBLICATIONS, THE WEBSITE etc.

Peace Tax Return: In membership surveys, members of both CC and NIPP indicated that if they legally had the choice of depositing in a Peace Fund that portion of their income taxes used for military defence, they would do so. This led CC and NIPP to work on a Canadian version of the Peace Tax Return form initiated by Conscience UK and the NWTRCC of Washington, DC, brought back to Canada by those attending the 10th International Conference in Belgium in 2004. The form was finalized in early 2005 and made available in both English and French at income tax time in Canada (from February to April). Copies were sent to all members. 800 were distributed as inserts in our newsletter, It was placed for distribution in a variety of peace and social justice centers and inserted in Press for Conversion, a Canadian peace publication with a circulation of about 1200. Copies were distributed during a demonstration opposed to the Iraq war held in major cities throughout Canada, and at other public events across Canada, for a total hard copy distribution of close to 5000. Another 2000 copies of the French translation were distributed in Quebec, the Maritime provinces, and Ontario. The PTR was also sent electronically to 400 peace and justice organizations, with an encouragement for them to distribute it to their supporters.

CC Leaflet in English/French: This leaflet, which is also available on the CC website, was extensively revised in 2004 and updated in 2005 to reflect the wider orientation of CC as noted above under 'Peace Tax Campaign'.

Newsletters: CC produced two newsletters in 2005 and in 2006 (spring and fall) and NIPP one each year (spring).

An article on Edith Adamson, founder and guiding light of Conscience Canada for many years was published in Peace Review, spring 2006. It was written by Marilyn Hebert, our previous international representative.

New Outreach Material: CC has begun producing a short DVD about CC and conscientious objection to military taxation as a way of raising awareness of this issue among Canadians. We have been fortunate to have the voluntary assistance of a professional filmmaker, found funding for the project, and begun contacting people to address the issues we want to feature.

Website: CC has a new webmaster who has suggested a number of changes on the site to make it more accessible and easy to navigate, including making hotlink connections with WTR/PTF groups, as well as with other peace groups. NIPP also has a new webmaster who revamped the website, simplified access (see new email and website addresses) and in general made it more user friendly.

9. ONGOING COMMUNICATION

CC Board Meetings: To allow for input between board members on issues requiring much consultation, several conference calls included people from British Columbia to New Brunswick. Topics covered in conference call "meetings" included lobby preparation, budget issues, work plans and work plan reviews, the newsletter. Conference calls supplemented the frequent use of email messages between board members.

Pre-Lobby Meeting: In February 05, prior to a week of lobbying government officials, board members met to become better acquainted with one another as well as to discuss both the legislation (The Conscientious Objection Act) and contentious and complex issues such as CC's stand on peace-keeping missions/police-type peacekeeping/non-violent conflict resolution. Board members also examined contents of the "leaving behind" information folder to all government officials met during the course of the week.

Board meetings within the Lobby Week: Topics discussed included CC accomplishments/present status/future orientation and priorities/ongoing projects/use of email/evaluation of lobby work.

Post-Ottawa Reflections: A number of board members shared in writing their reflections on the week in Ottawa and what it entailed for the future of CC/NIPP.

10. CONCLUSION

Both CC and NIPP found that the information provided by their respective membership surveys has helped to indicate where we are going and how we are going to get there. Both also appreciate the offers of help towards reaching their goals.