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Give your conscience a workout.

## Passion for peace

What if peace were held as the organizing principle for society? What if non-violent conflict resolution, rather than defence and offence, shaped national and international strategies for peace? What if military “boot camp” focussed on intensive training in violence prevention, mediation, and reconciliation instead of physical prowess, aggression and weaponry?

Mennonite Church Canada is taking an active role in promoting a culture of peace, including non-violent conflict resolution, within Canada and abroad, and these efforts are paying off. A Private Members Bill tabled in the Canadian House of Commons on Sept. 30, 2009 (Bill C-447) calls for the creation of a Canadian Department of Peace, headed by a Cabinet-level minister. This, in part, results from efforts of the Canadian Department of Peace Initiative, a grassroots organization with whom Mennonite Church Canada has partnered for this initiative.

Tabled by MP Bill Siksay (Douglas-Burnaby) and seconded by MP Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough-Agincourt), Bill C-447 describes the intended department’s work as that which is “dedicated to peace-building and the study of conditions that are conducive to both domestic and international peace.”

“It is a long, long way from being passed in the House of Commons,” says Janet Plenert, Executive Secretary of Mennonite Church Canada Christian Witness, though she is encouraged by the bill.

“We know from the experience of the Conscientious Objection to Military taxation bill that such a bill will likely need to be reintroduced multiple times over many years.”

Plenert is hopeful that Bill C-447 will initiate ongoing discussions about non-violent peace building as a viable alternative to war and a fundamental approach to societal behaviour and response. She says that a strong and vocal grassroots movement supporting the principles of the bill will give it more weight and increase the potential for future implementation.

Bill C-447 arrives at a time when Mennonite Church Canada is taking deliberate steps to bring concepts of non-violent peace into the public arena. Over the past year-and-a-half, General Secretary Robert J. Suderman has addressed the Canadian Council of Churches twice on the topic of “Peace in the Public Square” to favourable response. Delegates to Mennonite Church Canada’s Annual Assembly in June 2009 voted to support a proposal of the same name, which encourages congregations across the country to share the message on a larger, more public scale.

Praise God for this growing passion for peace!

For more information on Peace in the Public Square, search [www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1185](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1185)

*We invite you to share with your congregation the following story from our staff about the growing visibility of peace in Canadian society. It should take no more than two minutes to read aloud. You might also wish to include it in your church newsletter.*

*“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ.” 1 Cor. 3:11*