

GLOBAL

World cooperation is more necessary now than ever before, and Parliament needs to come together

By DOUGLAS ROCHE NOVEMBER 22, 2021

To build policies for common security, basic principles need to be agreed upon. Is there basic agreement within Canada's Parliament for a human security agenda? As a new Parliament in Canada commences, it would be inspiring to see an expression of common beliefs on vital issues.



Liberal MP Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, left, Bloc Québécois MP Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe, NDP MP Heather McPherson, and Green MP Elizabeth May all signed Doug Roche's statement of principle. He sent the statement to five Members of Parliament from five different parties, and noted that if they signed, there would be no implication they were speaking for their party, just exercising their right as a Member of Parliament to express views. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade, Sam Garcia and courtesy of Flickr

EDMONTON—World problems centring around COVID-19, climate change, nuclear weapons, and inequalities pose immense challenges to political systems everywhere. The well-being of all humanity is at stake. An agenda for common survival is urgent. As the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow showed, world cooperation is more necessary now than ever before.

To build policies for common security, basic principles need to be agreed upon. Is there basic agreement within Canada's Parliament for a human security agenda? As a new Parliament in Canada commences, it would be inspiring to see an expression of common beliefs on vital issues. I decided to test the idea and, with my assistant Khalid Yaqub, wrote, "A Statement of Principles on Human Security" (printed below).

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I sent the statement to five Members of Parliament from five different parties, and noted that if they signed, there would be no implication they were speaking for their party, just exercising their right as a Member of Parliament to express views. The following four MPs signed the statement: Liberal MP Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, Bloc MP Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe, NDP MP Heather McPherson, and Green Party MP Elizabeth May.

These four should be applauded for identifying themselves with a common set of principles. But three Conservative MPs, whom I approached, declined. Is there something in the Conservative platform that would preclude Conservative MPs from supporting a statement of principles as apolitical as this one? Read the statement below and decide for yourself. The exercise showed me how difficult it is in modern politics to get political agreement even on issues that are essential to our very survival. The fact that MPs from four parties did agree is hopeful.

Statement of Principles on Human Security

1. World cooperation is essential to resolve the security, economic, social, and environmental problems that leap across national borders. Canada must contribute actively to this process.
2. Political institutions must regain a sense of confidence—the kind of confidence shown by world leaders at the end of World War II when they started the United Nations to save humanity from the scourge of war and advance economic and social justice everywhere.
3. Governments must build on the achievements of the multilateral system: for example, there has been no world war in the past 75 years; hundreds of millions of people have been lifted out of poverty; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has enabled countless people to live safer, longer, and more dignified lives.
4. We support the 12 commitments already made by states at the 75th anniversary of the UN in 2020: leave no one behind; protect the planet; promote peace and prevent conflict; abide by international law and ensure justice; place women and girls at the centre; build trust; improve digital cooperation; upgrade the United Nations; ensure sustainable financing; boost partnerships; listen to and work with youth; be prepared for future crises, including, but not limited to, public health crises.
5. The immediate pandemic crisis demands a massive global vaccination program as a chief priority in government planning.
6. We call for stronger measures to ensure Canada does not contribute to genocide and other crimes against humanity, via arm sales, diplomatic cover, or by turning a blind eye. People have a right to peace and security. This includes: food, health care, water and sanitation, education and decent work, which the Sustainable Development Goals help provide.
7. No meaningful social progress is possible without the active participation of women and girls. Women's equal leadership, economic inclusion, and gender-balanced decision-making strengthen the world community.
8. Canada must fulfill its international obligations to eliminate Canada's greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.
9. Governments must give broader support for non-proliferation and the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction; effective control of conventional weapons; and regulation of new weapons of technology. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is a step towards the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons.
10. We support the call, made by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in his new document, "Our Common Agenda," for a "Summit of the Future" in 2023, involving governments, principal international institutions, and civil society to forge a new global consensus on strengthening human security.

This statement of principle was signed by Liberal MP Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, Bloc Québécois MP Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe, NDP MP Heather McPherson, and Green MP Elizabeth May.

Douglas Roche is a former Canadian Senator. His most recent book is Recovery: Peace Prospects in the Biden Era.

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