

First, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight in favour of the motion that has been presented.

My name is Stephen Moore, and I teach English at the University of Regina, including at Campion College. My daughter is a recent graduate of LeBoldus High School, and I am myself the product of the Catholic School system in New Brunswick.

So, I'm grounding my comments in my understanding of Catholic teaching on war—imperfect as it may be—and in my background in learning and teaching at Christian and Catholic institutions, as well as in my understanding of the current political climate, in which our leaders all too often call on us to see war as the normal or natural solution to our common problems.

Before coming here tonight, I visited the Regina Catholic School Board's website, where I read the scriptural quotation featured on the Office of the Director's page.

It comes from 2nd Peter, and says, "I pray that they grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord." (2 Peter 3:18)

So I went and re-read 2nd Peter chapter 3, and I like it because it's a teaching chapter, a chapter that reinforces the importance of teaching, and because it's also a forward-looking chapter that encourages Christians to commit themselves to peace.

2nd Peter looks forward to a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells—unlike our current situation, in which violence and injustice reign supreme.

And just a few verses before the one that appears on the website, the author exhorts his readers to "be eager to be found without spot or blemish before him, at peace." (2 Peter 3:14)

That "him" is, of course, the Lord, the one we call the Prince of Peace, and I take this verse to be an exhortation to faithful learners and faithful teachers to be on the lookout for every opportunity to make sure the future is more peaceful than the past.

I'd humbly suggest this motion and the petition lying behind it offer us such an opportunity here tonight. We have a chance to send a message that the Regina Catholic School District believes in peace.

It's a chance to say that we agree with what Pope Francis said when he said that "War is always a failure for humankind" in an Angelus address in September of 2013 that addressed the chaos of human violence, and referred to the Book of Genesis:

"It is exactly in this chaos that God asks man's conscience: 'Where is Abel your brother?' and Cain responds: 'I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?'. We too are asked this question, it would be good for us to ask ourselves as well: Am I really my brother's keeper? Yes, you are your brother's keeper! To be human

means to care for one another! But when harmony is broken, a metamorphosis occurs: the brother who is to be cared for and loved becomes an adversary to fight, to kill. What violence occurs at that moment, how many conflicts, how many wars have marked our history! We need only look at the suffering of so many brothers and sisters. This is not a question of coincidence, but the truth: we bring about the rebirth of Cain in every act of violence and in every war. All of us! And even today we continue this history of conflict between brothers, even today we raise our hands against our brother. Even today, we let ourselves be guided by idols, by selfishness, by our own interests, and this attitude persists. We have perfected our weapons, our conscience has fallen asleep, and we have sharpened our ideas to justify ourselves. As if it were normal, we continue to sow destruction, pain, death! Violence and war lead only to death, they speak of death! Violence and war are the language of death!

“After the chaos of the Flood, when it stopped raining, a rainbow appeared and the dove returned with an olive branch. I think also of the olive tree which representatives of various religions planted in Plaza de Mayo, in Buenos Aires, in 2000, asking that there be no more chaos, asking that there be no more war, asking for peace.

“And at this point I ask myself: Is it possible to walk the path of peace? Can we get out of this spiral of sorrow and death? Can we learn once again to walk and live in the ways of peace? Invoking the help of God, under the maternal gaze of the Salus Populi Romani, Queen of Peace, I say: Yes, it is possible for everyone! From every corner of the world tonight, I would like to hear us cry out: Yes, it is possible for everyone! Or even better, I would like for each one of us, from the least to the greatest, including those called to govern nations *[and, I might add, those called to govern school boards]* to respond: Yes, we want it!”

Those are the Pope's words.

I would say that if we want peace, if we look forward to a future in which there is no war, in which war is not considered normal or inevitable, we should start acting in small ways—in whatever small ways are available to us—to achieve it, and tonight offers an opportunity to make a statement in favour of peace.

I mentioned at the start of my remarks the forward-looking, teaching character of 2nd Peter, but there's another forward-looking, teaching text from the scriptures that also foresees a day without war, and it comes from the prophet Isaiah, who not only imagined a day in which there would be no war, but also called on all of us to work toward that day in every way that we can:

“They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift sword against nation; neither shall they learn war anymore.” (Isaiah 2:4)

I would respectfully ask this body to consider and support the aims of the motion that has been presented, because doing so could represent one small step out of the spiral, and one small step towards the day Isaiah and Peter envisioned—a day of peace.

Thank you very much for taking the time to listen to my remarks.