

EASTERN SYNOD of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

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August 16, 2010

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0N2

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

Subject: National Mental Health Strategy

For decades, across the country, provinces have been cutting mental health beds in hospitals, even as incidents of mental illness has been rising. Today the numbers tell us that one in five Canadians will experience a mental illness in their lifetimes, and yet illnesses such as depression and bipolar disorders remain largely behind closed doors. If people do seek help, they experience long waiting lists to see trained psychiatrists. For children and their families struggling with mental illness the lack of support, programs and facilities is even more serious. Rural patients also face serious limitations to getting help. Despite the seriousness of this problem, Canada remains one of the few western countries without a national strategy on mental health.

Therefore at its bi-annual assembly, the Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada adopted the following resolution:

“That this Synod express its profound disappointment and growing concern to the Government of Canada about the persistent and growing reality of mental health issues in Canada and that this Assembly call on the Government of Canada to work with Provincial and Territorial governments to develop and implement a national mental health strategy.”

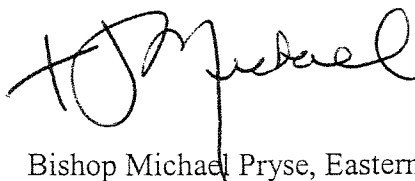
Mindful of Out of the Shadows at Last—Transforming Mental Health Illness and Addiction Services in Canada by the Honourable Michael J. L. Kirby and the Honourable Wilbert Joseph Keon, the Government of Canada needs to push for a cohesive national strategy. Our nation has to find ways to remove the stigma of mental illness. The Federal Government must invest money to improve services for patients, to increase awareness among physicians, and to develop much needed help for youth and young adults suffering from mental health issues.

We urge your Government to adopt a National Mental Health Strategy as soon as possible.

In closing, I wish to thank you for the opportunity to write to you regarding this important matter. I also wish to express my appreciation for your consideration of the same.

With all of God's blessings,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Pryse". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and "P".

Bishop Michael Pryse, Eastern Synod of the
Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada
MP/sc

- c. The Honourable Leona Aglukkaq, Minister of Health
- The Honourable Michael Ignatieff, Leader of the Official Opposition
- Gilles Duceppe, Leader of the Bloc Québécois
- The Honourable Jack Layton, Leader of the New Democratic Party
- Ed Stelmach, Premier of Alberta
- Gordon Campbell, Premier of British Columbia
- Greg Selinger, Premier of Manitoba
- Shawn Graham, Premier of New Brunswick
- Danny Williams, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador
- Floyd Roland, Premier of the Northwest Territories
- Darrell Dexter, Premier of Nova Scotia
- Eva Aariak, Premier of Nunavut
- Dalton McGuinty, Premier of Ontario
- Robert Ghiz, Premier of Prince Edward Island
- Jean Charest, Premier of Quebec
- Brad Wall, Premier of Saskatchewan
- Dennis Fentie, Premier of the Yukon Territory
- The Rev. Susan Johnson, National Bishop, ELCIC
- Archbishop Fred Hiltz, Primate, the Anglican Church of Canada