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October 24, 2012

The Honourable Vic Toews, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Public Safety  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

**Re: Cuts to Part-Time Chaplains by the Correctional Service of Canada**

Dear Minister Toews:

As Bishop of the Eastern Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) I write to express my deep concern and that of our Eastern Synod congregations, regarding the decision not to renew part-time contracts with faith groups who provide chaplaincy services within Correctional Service Canada (CSC). Your decision, if not reversed, will seriously impact numerous groups, including Christians, and the lives of all those incarcerated individuals who would normally have been ministered to by those part-time chaplains.

I am at a loss to understand why the Interfaith Committee on Chaplaincy (IFC) was not consulted! Other Faith Group Leaders are equally perplexed. With them I ask you to provide clarification of your reasons for ending the part-time contracts. Surely your research indicates that effectively meeting the spiritual needs of incarcerated individuals reduces recidivism and thus lowers the financial costs associated with federal imprisonment? What spiritual care initiatives will be put in place to ensure the rehabilitation of incarcerated individuals who self-identify with the smaller faith communities? Surely you don't expect those smaller faith communities to serve the spiritual needs of incarcerated individuals solely on a volunteer basis? Travel expenses alone would be prohibitive. Finally, I am distressed that your Department would make the decision to cut all part-time chaplains and thereby virtually eliminate almost all non-Christian spiritual care, this while Canada is committed to religious pluralism!

Again, I encourage you to both rescind the decision not to renew the contracts of part-time chaplains and to commit to providing the funding to allow this chaplaincy initiative to continue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Michael". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'M'.

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

- c. The Hon. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister
- The Hon. Thomas Mulcair, Leader of the Opposition
- The Hon. Bob Rae, Interim Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada
- The Hon. Randall Garrison, Opposition Shadow Cabinet, Public Safety
- The Hon. Francis Scarpaleggia, Liberal Critic, Public Safety
- Don Head, Commissioner, CSC
- Rev. Rick Burk, Director General, Chaplaincy, CSC
- Ms. Monique Marchand, President, IFC
- The Rev. Susan Johnson, National Bishop, ELCIC